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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 435. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 1ST, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

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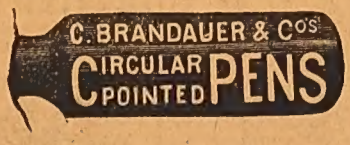

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 435.] For the Week ending May 1st, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

A BROKEN MASK

BY JOAN BARRETT.

CHAPTER I.

THE ARRIVAL OF A STRANGER.

EVERY pot and pan in the old-fashioned kitchen shone with great brilliancy, and some of them that had the good fortune to be suspended opposite the turned-up leaf of the oak table might have been pardoned if they imagined that their lustre being reflected in the well-polished board added to the beauty of the shining table.

Aunt Shales, the housekeeper at Honey-pots Farm, had been hard at work all the October morning, scouring and rubbing and cleaning, until Emily, her one much-tried assistant, had given unmistakable signs of rebellion which Aunt Shales had promptly resented.

"Some gals be born muddlers, and some be born fools," said Aunt Shales to her nephew's wife, a pale, dark-haired, wiry-looking woman, who had dropped in to take tea with her husband's relative. "In my 'pinion that Em'ly's a sight worse than either. She's got no more idea of rubbin' up a stick of furniture than that duck a-hangin' up over your head. To see her making believe that she's polishin' sets me all on a twitter. She rubs for all the world as though she thinks she's a-dustin' a peach. I'd rather be married forty times over—and *you* knows what married life is, Polly, and how tryin' the best of men can be when the fit takes 'em, which was too often the case with Shales—than have the knockin' under and the makin' of a good servant girl out of one flighty headed gal. Not as Em'ly'll ever be wuth the salt she eats, and many's the time I've told her so. But gels be like thrashin' machines—whatever you puts in 'em, out it all goes."

"I've got no cause to complain of my husband," said Polly, with a compression of her thin, thread-like lips. "*He* never goes about makin' disturbances in fam'lies and inventin' the Lord knows what, like some people as I knows of."

Aunt Shales opened the tea-pot lid and gently stirred its steaming contents with a spoon as she remarked suavely, but with an uneasy light in her small, twinkling eyes: "Oh, don't mention *her*, Polly. The very name of our John's 'Riar makes me feel like never openin' my Bible again. The ructions she've caused! And, as I says, I can't for the life of me see why. Oh, she's a bitter weed is John's 'Riar!"

"I don't say as John's 'Riar is free from blame," said Polly, going red in the face. "But there's them as is older than her and a deal wuss." She took a cup of tea from the tray and began to stir it violently. "I was in at Aunt Jane's last night," she added, fixing her eye accusingly upon her relative's fat, rosy face, "an' I heard from her as you'd bin tellin' as I said that Aunt Jane had never paid Farmer Strange for the pig she had of him come Christmas twelvemonth!"

Aunt Shales wrinkled her plump forehead

"*Oh, don't mention* her, *Polly.*'

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Aunt Shales opened the door.

in strong amazement, and looked the very personification of injured innocence.

"Lawks, Poll," said she. "Didn't you tell me so? Well I never; I could have sworn you did, my dear," as Polly burst out into an excited and indignant negative. "But, of course, if you says as you didn't, why you didn't, and that's enough. Oh, I never argifys about nothing, I don't."

"It's a pity as your mem'ry's such a short 'un," said Polly with a snort. "I'm sure that I was never so took in all my life as when Aunt Jane asked me what I meant by setting about Thorneydene as she was no better than a thief. You could have knocked me down with a feather! As if I, with six children and the baby down with the measles, have got any time for gossiping about Aunt Jane's affairs!"

"Course you ain't! If Jane wasn't an old maid, and had been blessed with a better head-piece—not as it's her fault, poor thing, that she's never married—and ain't much better than a fool, as you may say—she'd know that! But there, some folks they won't reason, and you couldn't knock sense into 'em, not if you tried with a sledge-hammer. So it wasn't you as told me about her owin' Farmer Strange for her pig!" exclaimed Aunt Shales in tones of dubious surprise and soft wonderment. She rested her double chin in one small, fat hand and stared with a fixed expression at a plate of steaming tea-cake. "Now I wonders who it was. I knows somebody told me on the very day that Em'ly broke one of the best chiney plates. It must have been 'Lizer's Nell, if you says as it wasn't you, Poll." She refused to hear the words of dissent that began to bubble from the younger woman's lips, and continued with the same placid serenity. "I knows I saw her the same afternoon 'cause she warned me against buying any chiney cement from Roger's shop. '"Tain't a bit of good,' she says. Nell's a rare 'un for getting a stack of wheat out of a single straw, she is."

"I dunno who told you, but I do know as I didn't, Aunt Shales," cried Polly very loudly this time, and growing redder in the visage and more fiery in the eyes. "I shouldn't wonder if Aunt Jane goes back from her word now, and don't give my poor little Lottie the corals she promised her for a Christmas box! I do wish as some people 'd stick more to the truth, and not go spreadin' things about folks as don't even know the meanin' of backbitin' and slanderin'."

"So do I, Poll," said Aunt Shales with great feeling. "The mischief as them people can do ain't to be believed, is it? Oh, you may make up your mind to losing them corals. Jane told me she shouldn't spend a brass farthing on any of your children after hearin' that. 'Tain't to be expected, is it now? Lawks, Poll, we should feel the same if we was in her shoes, shouldn't we——"

Polly deposited her cup with a vicious rattle upon the tray, and glared wrathfully at the smiling amiable face opposite her.

"Considerin' as I never said it——" she began at the top of her voice, when Aunt Shales rose, winked mysteriously, and proceeded to unlock a cupboard by the side of the fireplace.

"You ain't got no rum in your tea," she said. "A drop in the winter time is good for spasms——"

"I ain't got no spasms. What I was sayin' was that considerin'——"

"It keeps out the cold," said Aunt Shales sweetly, as she returned with a bottle and placed it by Polly's elbow. "As you was sayin'—Oh, I shall tell Jane as you says you didn't tell me, oh, I shall, Poll. Right's right all the world over, 'cept when it's wrong, as I says. An' seeing as we ain't here for long, and allays going about with one leg in the grave, as you may say, why, let's be happy while we can. Oh, I can't abide them backbitin' folks—help yourself, now, do, Poll. 'Tain't often as I takes a drop of anything, as you knows, but seein' as you've come to tea, and that Em'ly's bin worritin of me so——" She stretched out her hand for the bottle, and poured a very small quantity of rum into her tea-cup, eyeing the contents of Polly's cup, and then measuring the bottle with her eyes before replacing it upon the table.

"It don't do no good to say what you thinks, do it? An' to hear some folks talk, *an'* 'specially our 'Lizer's Nell, you'd think as she could have made the world better than God A'mighty and wanted no rest on the seventh day, too. I do declare they puts me out of all patience. 'Taint bad rum, is it, Poll? Brings out the flavour of the tea, don't it? Oh, I shan't buy no more tea at Rogers'. The last was half powder, and Mr. John did go on. I s'pose you've heard as he'll soon be in the Bankrupt Court?"

"What, Mr. Gillway!" cried Polly, quite forgetting her own grievance in the excitement caused by this news.

"*Mr. John!* I dunno nothin' about *him*. He's like the cobblers' wax—too close to squeeze much out of. No, I means Rogers. Oh, it's gospel truth, Poll."

"You don't say so, Aunt Shales! And him seemin' so prosperous, too——"

Polly broke off abruptly. Someone had given a vigorous knock upon the kitchen door. "Em'ly was upstairs cleanin' herself," as Aunt Shales expressed it. The two women exchanged glances in the almost darkened room.

"Light the lamp, Poll, while I sees who it is," whispered Aunt Shales, rising and going to the door.

Visitors, familiar visitors, at Honey-pots never knocked. They entered boldly without superfluous ceremony.

Aunt Shales opened the door. In the grey wintry light she saw a short, thin man, with a clean-cut face, and eyes of remarkable keenness. Even in the murkiness of the winter evening they arrested Aunt Shales' attention. The stranger was well dressed in black and wore gloves.

"I beg your pardon," he said, in a low, clear voice, "for disturbing you, but I am told you have rooms to let——"

"Rooms to let here!" interrupted Aunt Shales, peering up at the stranger in surprise and some resentment. "Oh, lawks no, sir. Mr. Gillway, my master, ain't likely to be

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wishin' to let no rooms. Who in the world could have sent you here?"

"I was inquiring for apartments in the village," said the stranger in his clear, penetrating voice, "and I was distinctly told that I should obtain lodgings at the big farm upon the high road to Leigh. Perhaps there is another farm close at hand——"

"Farmer Strange can't be goin' to take in lodgers, can he, Polly?" called Aunt Shales, turning her head towards the tea-table. "Greyhouse Farm is close agin our own. You can see its roof from the meadow yonder, an' our fields joins further on. Maybe it *is* at Gray-House after all, though it 'ud be a rare blow to Miss Kitty's pride if the farm's turned into a lodgin' house!" she added, turning now to the stranger.

He had advanced over the threshold of the kitchen with a soft velvety tread that bore some resemblance to the cautious movements of a cat, and his keen eyes roved round the apartment with an eager curiosity that did not escape the watchful Polly.

"What a delightful kitchen!" he exclaimed, and Aunt Shales beamed with gratified pride at the stranger's evident admiration of her copper vessels, the long snowy deal table, the equally spotless dresser, with its brave array of pink and white china, and the best oak table, with its turned-up leaf. "How very much I regret having disturbed you, and how sorry I am that it is out of your power to acccommodate me. You feel quite sure that your employer would not let me have a couple of rooms?"

"Oh, there ain't no doubt about *that!*" cried Aunt Shales, jerking her grey head. "He ain't fond enough of strangers to take 'em under his roof, nor bad enough off, I hopes, though, to be sure, I don't know nothin' about his affairs, seein' he's not one to make free with you, nor tell you nothin' himself, as some men will. Now, the Stranges, they be poor, for all as Mrs. Caffyn's the gals' aunt, an' their mother was the youngest daughter of Squire Hawthorn, an' came out of as good a house as you'll find in all Sussex."

"Your employer is not at home?"

"He's gone to Leigh to buy some sheep. But lawks, if he was here, sir, you couldn't get no furrader than I can send you. Mr. Gillway ain't the one to let rooms in his house. Little as I knows about him, I knows that much."

"Gillway! Gillway!" repeated the stranger. "What an odd coincidence that the name of your employer should also be the name of a very old and valued friend of mine. He had a son, a fine strapping young fellow—but of course your employer would not be a connection of that family, no, no, the idea is ridiculous!"

"'Tain't such a common name," said Aunt Shales, "an' Mr. Gillway's mighty close about hisself and fam'ly. He's a stranger in these parts, too. He got the farm through an advertisement in the *West Sussex Gazette* just six weeks ago. He's a young man, sir; Christian name, John."

"The name of my friend's boy! And what a strange circumstance—I happen to have a photograph of the lad in my card-case—I was greatly attached to them all, being a widower with no children of my own. Might I ask you, my dear madam, to look at the portrait and tell me if it in any way resembles your employer? A thousand thanks. What a very extraordinary affair."

Aunt Shales carried the portrait to the light of the lamp, adjusted her tortoise-shell spectacles upon her little turned-up nose, and peered carefully at the photograph of a thin young face with a firm, determined mouth, and big prominent chin.

The dark eyes bore a stern expression, strange to encounter in so youthful a face. It was the look of a lad who had discovered from the very outset that life was a hard battle in which he had determined to fight to the last, and to fight crookedly rather than not at all.

"Oh, it's him right enough. Just you squint at it, too, Poll. He looks a sight older now, sir, and more gloomy-like. Not as he seems over cheerful in the picture, do he? An' so he's the son of an old friend of yours, is he, sir? To what part might he belong, if I may make so bold as to ask, sir?"

"He was born in Devonshire," answered the stranger curtly, reading the great curiosity in Aunt Shales' face. He took the photograph from Polly's fingers, and replaced it in his breast pocket. "I will not keep you longer from your tea——"

"Oh, lawks, sir, sure-*ly* you'll stop an' take a cup, and wait till Mr. John comes home!" cried Aunt Shales. "I'm sure as he'll be glad to see a friend of his father's, unsociable and keep-hisself-to-hisself as he is——"

"I think not," said the stranger after a little hesitation. "Indeed, I almost think that it would be better if you and your friend will have the kindness not to mention my visit to Mr. Gillway," he coughed behind his hand, as he edged his

"Oh, it's him right enough."

way towards the door, followed by Aunt Shales. "You'll understand," he said very low, "painful family rupture; no desire to awaken old memories. Thank you, my good lady. I hope you will maintain silence——"

"Oh, if you'd rather as I don't say nothin', why of course I shan't," said Aunt Shales with mingled curiosity and disappointment in her round face. "What a nuisance them fam'ly ructions be, to be sure," she added, with a feeling sigh. "Causes a sight of unpleasantness, don't they, sir? Might it have been with Mr. John as you happened to have your little ——"

"Exactly. Thank you very much. I am glad that I came here instead of going to the other farm. I shall not make further inquiries for rooms now. Good-evening to you."

Aunt Shales waited in the open doorway until the

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stranger's form was lost in the gloom. As she closed the door with a resounding bang, she said to Polly:

"Lawks, Poll, what queer things do happen in this world! An' Mr. Gillway tellin' me as sharp as you please when I asked him the question as he'd no fam'ly! Not as I believed him, as you knows, for many's the time as I've remarked to you that a man don't lock up drawers in his writin' table for nothin'; nor yet turn the key in the locks of them two big boxes as he's got in his room. I've never seen them opened but once since here I've been, and then 'twas only when I happened to go into his room not knowin' as he was there, an' there he was kneelin' before one of 'em, an' he jumped up an' slammed down the lid as if he'd sin sudden death jumpin' out on him, instead of me comin' in at the door as innocent as any lamb unborn! Oh, I've allays said, and shall say to my dying day, as there's something queer about Mr. Gillway. Why, he never gets a letter like other Christian-folk, an' then the way as he looks through and through you, an' shets hisself up, an' stays that quiet as many's the time I've said to myself as I might jest as well have a funeral in the house. As I says, it does you good to open your lips. It's like taking in a bit of nourishin' food, ain't it, Poll? An' as for settin' as mum as that Chiney boy on the mantel-shelf, why I couldn't, not if you was to pay me in golden guineas."

"I can't say as I liked the look of *him*," observed Polly reflectively and with a nod of her head in the direction of the door. "He moves about too quiet, and he's too soft spoken to please me. I can't abide them buttery-mouthed folk."

"No more can't I, Poll," declared Aunt Shales. "He *was* quiet, now I comes to think about it. An' he didn't seem as though he wanted to let too much out of the bag, did he? I wonders who he was? Lawks, I might have asked him his name, mightn't I?"

The kitchen door opened with startling abruptness, and a young man strode hurriedly into the room. He turned a dark face lit by flaming, passion-filled eyes towards the door which he had left open. "Will you go?" he shouted, and as Aunt Shales and Polly rose from their seats in alarmed surprise, he stretched out one strong, vigorous arm and wrenched a hunting whip from its nail. "I'm trying to earn an honest living, and by Heaven, no words, no threats, that you can utter shall turn me back from my purpose!"

Striding towards the door he cracked the whip in the air. Aunt Shales heard the sound of hurrying footsteps that died away upon the bricked court-yard which stretched in front of the kitchen.

John Gillway listened for a moment with an ugly look upon his strong, masterful features. Then, slamming the door, he tossed the whip with a loathing gesture upon the floor.

"Bring my tea in the gun-room; there is a fire there, I hope," and, as Aunt Shales nodded, he added in the same curt tone of exasperation, "put a plate of meat on the tray; I shall want nothing more to-night."

Without deigning to notice his housekeeper's visitor, who had dropped a couple of hasty courtesies during his speech to Aunt Shales, he strode from the room.

Polly waited until she felt sure that he was not within hearing. Bending over the table, where Aunt Shales was now arranging a small tray, she whispered:

"Did you ever! Do you think he was talking to *that* man, Aunt Shales?"

Aunt Shales pursed up her lips and cut with great carefulness a very delicate slice of ham, which she placed between two pieces of well-buttered bread.

"It's best not to think at all, Poll," said she. "As I says, still waters runs deep, an' if you lets nothin' out, why nobody short of an Ananias an' a Sapphiry rolled into one can up an' say as you did. Mark my words, Poll, the least one says is the soonest mended, an', as I've said and shall say times without number, I *do* like them as can keep a quiet tongue in their heads."

In the little gun-room, John Gillway stood before the almost dead fire, and stared with sombre eyes into the grey and white ashes. The ferocious expression in his dark face was not pleasant to see.

"I might have known that I should be tracked down and unearthed," he muttered between his set teeth. "I've expected it; the marvel is that I have hidden myself from him for so long."

CHAPTER II.

The Loves of Kitty Strange and John Gillway.

Greyhouse Farm stood upon the edge of the broad common. It was an old-fashioned, oddly-built dwelling, very plain and homely, but exceedingly comfortable for those who did not object to low ceilings and narrow, short doorways in their bedrooms. It had a commodious garden, with a broad gravel path flanked upon each side by mahonia bushes, roses and arbutus, and beneath the sitting-room windows there was a pretty lawn dotted with funnily-shaped flower beds. The remainder of the garden was occupied with vegetables and fruit trees, which the broad hedges of mahonia and shrubs did their utmost to screen from visitors' eyes. Upon the left-hand side of the garden was the farmyard, with its long row of pig-styes, its cow-house and stables, and at the back of the house lay a rick-yard where fowls and ducks and geese and wobbling, self-important turkeys lived their short lives.

There were a good many buildings in the rick-yard. It had a boiler-house, where the dead pigs were scalded before passing into the hands of the butcher for cutting up; a long wood-house, where Diana and Kitty Strange had kept their rabbits when they were children; a meal-house, stacked with sacks of oil-cakes and bins of meal; a chaff-house, where the farm lads cut up juicy mangel-wurzel and yellow swedes for the cows; and a big new cart-shed that Farmer Strange had built expressly to accommodate the smart little dog-cart which Mrs. Caffyn, his rich sister-in-law, had given to Kitty upon the girl's last birthday.

Once upon a time, long, long before George Strange was born, a part of this large yard had been an orchard. A few fruit trees still remained, rising here and there between the fat, bloated ricks like grey-headed survivors upon a battle-field. The front of the house was certainly pretty. It had a rose-covered porch, with a quaint little seat upon each side, and the flowers climbed right up to the girls' bedroom window to nod "Good-morning" and "Good-night" to them.

Kitty Strange was very proud of the fact that there were three large sitting-rooms in the old farm house. She called them "dining-room," "drawing-room," and "morning-room," but her father always spoke of them as "parlours," although in the early days of his marriage to his pretty, weak, repining little wife he had tried hard to adopt her style of vocabulary.

Mrs. Strange, as Aunt Shales had stated, came from one of the oldest and proudest families in Sussex. She had fallen in love with handsome, stalwart George Strange in the hunting field, where a man's fine figure and manliness are shown to the best advantage.

George Strange adored Miss Hawthorne for a long while in secret, until one day the girl was thrown in the field and his love betrayed itself in his passionate anxiety for her safety. He knew full well the utter folly of asking haughty old Squire Hawthorne for the hand of his prettiest daughter, and, finding that Dorothy was willing to run away with him, he sold his little estate, eloped with her, and after their marriage brought her to Greyhouse.

Mrs. Strange was of too romantic a temperament to find happiness in the humble position of a not very prosperous farmer's wife. She often cried over the "mistake" that she had made, and poor remorseful George Strange blamed himself even more severely than did his wife for inducing her to consent to an elopement. Her family disowned her.

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She wrote many times to her father and mother pleading for forgiveness; it was never granted, and it was not until she was dying that her sister, Mrs. Caffyn, the widow of a wealthy Irish barrister, condescended to visit her. Mrs. Caffyn was shocked to find that Dorothy was dying.

In her remorse she offered eagerly to do all that she could for the two tiny twin girls who were soon to be motherless. Mrs. Strange begged her to adopt them; to take them far away from the farm, and, above all, to prevent their marrying men in their father's position.

Mrs. Caffyn was childless. If she was worldly, she was good-hearted, and she fell impulsively in love with the two pretty children. She never suspected that Farmer Strange would raise any obstacle to her adopting them. But when Dorothy had been lain to her long rest in the elm-shaded churchyard, and the children were still piteously asking: "When will Mummy come back?" Good Mrs. Caffyn found upon making her proposal that the farmer was most unreasonably indignant at the idea of being separated from his little ones. At first he refused to hear more about the matter, and it was not until his sister-in-law had accused him of selfishness, and had pointed out the many advantages that the children would enjoy with her that a compromise was effected.

Farmer Strange suggested that Mrs. Caffyn should take the children to live entirely with her until they were old enough to be sent to school. Their holidays were to be passed at the farm. When their education was completed, they should spend six months of the year with him, and the remaining six with their aunt. At the age of twenty-one, the girls themselves should decide with which relative they preferred to live entirely.

She stood by the kitchen window.

Mrs. Caffyn laughed in her sleeve when she agreed to the proposal. She felt confident that her neices would have no hesitation in casting in their lot with hers. What girls would prefer to live in a lonely farm-house with a middle-aged father, where only one maid was kept, and where there was an absolute lack of society, to being petted and waited upon by a devoted aunt and her servants, and enjoying every luxury that wealth could provide? Of course, the girls would live with her.

Mrs. Caffyn told herself that she really felt quite sorry for their poor stupid father, who actually seemed to think that he stood an even chance with her in winning his daughters' love.

Kitty Strange was thinking of her approaching return to her aunt, as she stood by the kitchen window one afternoon in January, and listlessly watched Diana feed a large group of poultry in the yard. She could not understand how Di could take such interest in those stupid fowls. Kitty disliked fowls—sometimes she declared that she hated everything and everybody at Thorneydene. Old Betty, the middle-aged servant, had addressed her once or twice, but had received no answer.

She made another attempt, pausing in the act of rolling out a "lardy-roll" upon the spotless pastry-board, to ask with plaintive shrillness:

"Is he comin' to tea, or ain't he comin', Miss Kitty? That's all I want to know before puttin' the lardy-rolls into the tins. It ain't worth while to bake extry if there's only ourselves to tea."

Kitty turned, wrinkling her white forehead into a petulant frown.

"What are you talking about, Betty?" she asked crossly.

"I want to know if that Mr. Gillway's comin' to tea or not?" retorted Betty.

Kitty flushed to the roots of her dark curling hair as she answered:

"How should I know?"

"If you don't know, I dunno' who should," said Betty, rolling her pastry with unnecessary vehemence. "I shan't make extry," she added. "So if he *do* come he can just put up with what's goin'."

Kitty shrugged her shoulders and turned again to the contemplation of Diana and the fowls. She was not very fond of old Betty, who really had a bad temper, poor soul, and who had been at the Grey House ever since the death of Mrs. Strange.

So little did Kitty care for the woman, that she had once entreated her father to send Betty away and to substitute, in her place a young girl who would be willing to wear those pretty white caps, and dainty frilled aprons which Betty had looked upon so scornfully when Kitty had once brought some back with her after a visit to London.

Farmer Strange had resolutely refused to accede to Kitty's request. It was seldom that he denied any whim of Kitty's, but he was firm in his determination that Betty should remain at Grey House as long as she cared to stay.

The kitchen clock struck four. Kitty glanced hesitatingly at its square face, looked again at Diana, who was now talking to a couple of shaggy sheep-dogs, and then went quietly from the kitchen to her bedroom.

"I'd better meet him," she said to herself. "I must get it over somehow or other, and the sooner the better."

It was pretty to watch Kitty as she coquettishly arranged a very becoming hat upon her dark curls. The mirror framed a charming face with eyes so blue and bright that they seemed to reflect a nature of transparent honesty. Kitty was considered a beauty by most of her acquaintances, and no one concurred more fully in that opinion than Kitty herself. She made a careful toilette, buttoning a long pair of new gloves as she descended the stairs, and peeped into the kitchen.

"Tell Diana that I've gone to the post," she said to Betty.

Betty nodded, scanning Kitty with her sharp, almost colourless eyes.

"You've made yourself fine to go to post," she observed.

Kitty shut the door without answering. She had never disliked Betty so much as she did at that moment.

"A hateful, prying old thing!" she muttered angrily, as she passed through the garden and went out upon the common.

The air was chill and raw. A keen wind blew a few dead brown leaves before her as she hurried along, and a great bank of black fringed clouds told that rain was coming.

"I wish," said Kitty, "that I had never seen him. He is so unlike any of the others."

She posted her letter to Mrs. Caffyn and slowly turned

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her steps in the direction of a little copse where she knew John Gillway was waiting impatiently for her arrival.

Kitty had not mentioned his name to Mrs. Caffyn. Her letter had been filled with joyful ejaculations at the prospect of her speedy release from bondage in the monotonous desert of Thorneydene. Kitty never made many confidences, not even to Diana, who, being of a reserved disposition, was not at all likely to betray them.

She quickened her steps when she approached the wood. It would never do for John to see her lingering. He was already jealous and suspicious, and without cause, she thought resentfully. Kitty felt angry with John. She was vexed because she regarded him as being responsible for the predicament in which she was now placed. But how was John to know the sensations which ruffled her, when she met him with her sweetest smile and even held up her face for a kiss?

"Oh, Kitty," he said, "you *have* been a long while! I began to think that you were never coming!"

"I ought not to have come," she said. "I am behaving very wickedly—I don't know what ever Di or dad would say if they knew."

She raised her blue eyes with the saddest most self-reproachful look in the world to the man's dark face, and he flushed with eager hope as he cried:

"Why shouldn't they know? Why won't you let me tell them?"

"Because I daren't. In the first place, dad has made up his mind that neither Di nor I are to marry—or to be engaged even—before we are twenty-one. Oh, I could never let you speak to dad, John; you don't know what a bad opinion he would have of me when he found out that I had been meeting you secretly for the past six weeks. I—I—should die of shame."

"But I saw you first of all in your father's house. And it is all my fault! You would not have met me like this if I had not begged you," said Gillway. "I think that you exaggerate the difficulties of our position, Kitty. Even if your father refused to consent to our engagement at this present moment, he would know that we loved each other, and that would do away with all this bothering concealment that worries you so, my poor, sensitive little darling."

He bent to kiss her again. Kitty drew back and resolutely removed the arm which he had placed round her waist.

"Don't," she said. "I hate being—being courted like—like—a milk-maid!"

"Is this how milk-maids are courted?"

Kitty grew pale beneath his kisses. She jerked her head from side to side to avoid the touch of his lips.

"You are very cruel," she cried with a sob. "You know that I don't like it, and you only do it to show how masterful and horrid you can be."

Gillway released her immediately. His face clouded as he looked at her.

"You did not call me masterful and horrid a week or so ago, Kitty. Have you changed in your feeling towards me? Or"—he bent forward and took her hand—"have you heard anything about me?"

"As if I could hear anything about you when nobody knows who you are or where you came from," said Kitty pettishly.

"Then what has changed you?" he demanded with such fierce suspicion in his hard voice that she shrank and trembled before him.

"I have not changed, you silly John. I am only very miserable. Di and I have to go to London to-morrow!"

Gillway set his lips together. His sombre expression deepened, and a mistrustful look came into his eyes. They seemed to narrow.

"You must have known this yesterday, Kitty. Why didn't you tell me then?"

"Aunt's letter only came last night," she faltered. "Oh, John, don't look at me like that. You frighten me."

With a tender gesture, Gillway drew her hand through his arm. The hard suspicion died from his face at the distress in Kitty's voice.

"My darling!" he said in self-remorse, "forgive me. Be gentle with me, Kitty. I have found so much knavery and deception in the world, that—Heaven pardon me—I have grown to doubt even you! Don't tremble, dear. I'm a brute and a cad to behave like this toward you. As if you would break faith with me. Tell me again, Kitty, that you love me."

"I love you," she whispered, clinging to him not in affection, but in abject terror.

"You won't break your promise to me, Kitty? You will wait for me—and later on you will be my wife?"

"Yes, yes," murmured Kitty, hiding her pale face upon his shoulder.

"Thank God for the assurance of your love. It ought to drive the demons from my heart," said Gillway. "My little Kitty!"

"If—if—I were to break my word," she asked without raising her face, "what should you do, John?"

"Kill you, I think."

She shivered and clung yet closer to him.

"Not really? You couldn't be so wicked, John, though you do look so black and ugly and stern. And if I—married?"

"If you married me, it would be all right. I'd move Heaven and earth to gratify every caprice and to please you. But if you married another man——" he hesitated and smoothed her hair with loving, gentle fingers. "What a mad suggestion," he added. "The idea of your ever belonging to anyone but me!"

"It does seem absurd, doesn't it, John? Still, supposing that I—I—*did* marry some other man—would you forgive us?"

"No, by Heaven, no!"

"You wouldn't do us any harm, you revengeful thing!"

"There would be no harm too deadly that I would not do to the man. You don't understand, Kitty. I have never loved any other woman but you—except my mother."

Kitty raised her head, withdrawing herself softly from his arm.

"Is she living, your mother?"

"No. Why have you asked me all these questions Kitty? There is no one waiting in London for you?"

The cloudy suspicion was returning once more to his face. Kitty laughed as she shook her head.

"On my honour, no—at least, not to my knowledge. Of course, there may be a dozen or so of inconsolables anxiously looking out for my advent. You are frowning again, sir. I never knew anyone so unreasonable and jealous as you are in all my life. I wish you would look in the glass every time that you feel disagreeble."

"Why?"

"Because the sight of your ugliness would show you how terrifying you are in that condition. I could imagine you capable of murder when you look at me with such a ferocious expression."

Gillway passed his hand over his face and rubbed it as though to brush away the expression to which Kitty objected.

"I'll be good now," he said. "It's too bad of me to spoil our last few minutes together by giving way to my jealous feelings. Are you really going to-morrow? Can't you stay longer?"

"Oh, no," she answered with a sigh. "Di won't hear of it. She is determined to start to-morrow," and to herself she added, "and so am I."

"You would stay if your sister would?"

"Of course—only," she added uneasily, "it is not in her power to alter the plans that dad and Aunt Lulu made between them. Poor Di can't do anything except submit. And I must do the same, too."

"I shall come up and see you. In what part of London does your aunt live?"

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Kitty hesitated. Her heart was beating rapidly with nervousness. It would not do to tell John Gillway a direct lie. She stifled the involuntary temptation.

"At Prince's Gate. But we shan't be there long. Aunt has a lot of invitations to country seats. We are only going to stay in town while we are buying new clothes, you know, and very likely we shall go to Italy after Christmas. But,

"Di will be so cross with me if I bring you back."

of course, I shall write to you," she added quickly. "And if there is a chance of our meeting anywhere, I'll let you know. It would be such an awful disappointment if you came to London and didn't see me."

She drew out a dainty little gold watch.

"I must go home, John. It is past their hour for tea."

"I am coming back with you," said Gillway.

"I don't think you had better. Dad won't like it. He likes to be alone with us upon our last night with him."

"Poor old chap!" exclaimed Gillway with compassion. "How he must miss you! Oh, he couldn't mind my having tea with you, Kitty. It isn't as if I proposed staying all the evening. Besides, he asked me to drop in whenever I liked."

"Di will be so cross with me if I bring you back," objected Kitty, rubbing her soft cheek with a caressing movement against his hand. "What nice white hands you have for a farmer, John. I think it was your being so utterly different to all the men of dad's acquaintance about here, that made me like you. And then you know such a lot about music, and books and theatres and foreign countries, too! Do you know that you have never told me one little, teeny, weeny word about your past, sir? And I am dying with curiosity to know all about it, and what induced such a fine gentleman to buy a pokey little farm, and hide himself——"

"Hide!" interrupted Gillway harshly. "What do you mean, Kitty? I am not hiding!"

"Now, don't get cross again," she said smilingly. "You are full of thorns, John. Say good-bye to me like a good boy, and perhaps, only perhaps, mind, I'll send you a letter somewhere before Christmas comes."

"You had better. If you don't, I shall come after you. I shall expect a letter—let me see, you go away to-morrow, Tuesday—very well, on Thursday I must have a letter, Kitty. If not——"

"Don't frown again! I never saw anyone like you. If I don't write, John?"

"I shall come up and discover the reason of your silence."

Kitty looked at the strong, masterful face with half-admiring, half-shrinking eyes. She laughed, and the laugh hid her fear.

"I had better not write in that case," said she, "for I shall want to see you dreadfully."

"Oh, Kitty!" the man cried brokenly. "How can I let you go! If you only knew how far you have crept into my heart!"

"And you into mine, dear John."

"Let me come home with you? Every moment is precious to me now——"

"No," she answered with a pretty movement of sorrowful decision. "I mustn't make Diana angry. We must be very careful not to let her suspect our secret. Do you ever think what a horrid life Aunt Lulu and Di would lead me between them in London if they only suspected that—I loved you, John? You must be reasonable and wait until I am my own mistress."

"And then?" he asked, drawing her again to him and kissing her. "We will never be separated, please Heaven!"

Kitty went home through the fields, burning with shame at her weakness. She had intended to break with John Gillway, and she had been led by fear to make him solemn promises of fidelity.

"Oh, I do wish I had never met him!" she said to herself, clenching her little hands. "I am afraid of him!"

And Gillway as he retraced his steps to the lonely farm house, where Aunt Shales was waiting tea for him, looked up at the darkening skies with reverential and grateful eyes.

"Thank God for the love of a good woman," he murmured. "Heaven alone knows what would have become of me had I not met with my little Kitty. I must have gone to the bad! I know that I shall go wrong if I lose her."

(To be continued.)

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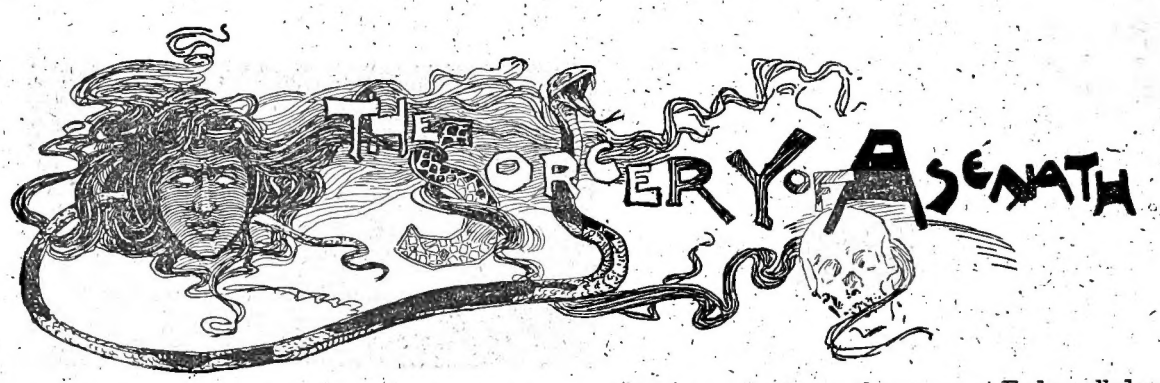

People often ask me why I gave up a promising business career and devoted myself to travelling, in which I find no pleasure; exploring, for which I have no taste; and archæology, which is to me the most tiring of pursuits. The question has never been answered, save by the statement that there is no reason to give, which involves the telling of an incredible story.

There are two or three to whom I would like to tell it. If they survive me they shall know—to that end these pages.

It is my conviction that whatever intelligent man has known he has tried to record in some way—that living truths, new to us, may be gleaned from the stone tablets of races extinct for ages. For such a truth I am searching. One man found it, but he is dead. His spirit I have called up, as the woman at Endor called up Samuel, and questioned it. He told me that the knowledge had sent it to the world of shades before its time, and had put power into the hands of an evil one, who had bidden it never in any place to reveal to any mortal what it knew.

"Even yet I must obey her," said the spirit of Paul Glen; "but what you seek is written."

As yet I have not read. Many strange things have I unearthed, but never this that I seek.

Now, I will write my story. You who read it may believe it or not, as you see fit. I know that it is true.

Floated to the middle of the pathway.

It is many years now since I went to South America to visit my sister Helen. I had not seen her since the day of her marriage, three years before, till she met me at the door of her own home and welcomed me in her old sweet and quiet manner. It seemed to me, at the first glance, that her face had aged too much, and that a certain fine expression—a suggestion of latent determination—had over-developed and marked her with stern lines. From the first moment, too, I feared the existence of a trouble in her life, of which her letters gave no hint.

She seemed, though, cheerful enough. She led the way into a great room that was shaded and cool, and full of the scent of lilacs. With a motion of her hand, she dismissed three or four black maids, whom she had been assisting or instructing at some sewing work, and they went out, courtesying and showing their white and even teeth at the door.

A fourth did not leave, but retired to a far end of the room, and went on with the sewing. I noticed what a tiny garment she was making, and what a sharply cut silhouette her face made against the white curtain by which she sat.

Helen chatted away, apologising for her husband's absence, asking a host of questions, and planning some pleasures for every one of the days of my stay with her. I lay back in my chair, with a feeling of languid content, and listened. When Helen suggested sleep and refreshment, I declined both, feeling no need for anything but her presence and that delicious room, the atmosphere of which was laden with rest as with the scent of the lilacs.

The black woman sat directly in the line of my vision, and I remember now that my gaze never strayed from her. I noticed, idly at first, then with interest, the regularity of her features, and the grand proportion of her head and bust. Her hair, brownish in colour, with dull copper tints, was as straight as my own, and she had hand and arm so perfectly moulded that, except for their black skin, they might have been those of a lady of

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high degree. But it was the pride, speaking from every line of that dark face, that most attracted my notice. There was in it, too, an exultant sense of power, and it was the most resolute face, black or white, that I ever saw.

Presently I began to feel that it required an effort to keep the thread of what Helen was saying, and to reply. Her voice seemed to get faint, then to come in snatches with an indistinct murmur between them, at last not at all, though I knew she was still speaking.

I was not unconscious, but perception was contracted and concentrated upon one abnormal effort. From me a narrow path of light stretched down the room to the black woman. She seemed to expand and to grow luminous; a vapour exhaled from her, floated to the middle of the pathway, and there assumed her own form almost nude, perfect like her face in its every line, motionless as if carved from ebony, but with fierce, impure eyes that looked straight into mine, and from which there seemed to be no escape.

Their gaze begot an overwhelming sense of disgust. My soul shuddered, but my body could not move. The evil face smiled. A cloud floated over the form of ebony, slowly passed away, revealing one like polished ivory, but the eyes changed not.

How long their gaze held me motionless and helpless I do not know. Suddenly, something white shut out the vision, and my sister's voice, now harsh and loud, struck upon my hearing like a lash. Instantly the room assumed its ordinary appearance, the scent of the lilacs greeted me as if I had newly come into the atmosphere, and Helen, in her white dress, stood before me trembling.

The negress at the window looked at us both with insolent amusement. It was to her that Helen spoke.

"How dared you!" she exclaimed; "oh, that I could punish you as you deserve."

The girl smiled and slowly drew her needle through the cloth in her lap.

"Go out to Lucas," commanded Helen. "Go."

The girl drew herself up, and her face took on an expression of sullen defiance. It seemed for an instant that she would not obey. She clenched her hands, and I heard her teeth grate together. But she hesitated only a moment, then went slowly out of the room. Presently she passed by the window, pushing a heavy barrow full of earth. Lucas, the gardener, followed, carrying a large gad. In a minute or two they passed again, going in the same direction, and afterwards again and again. The girl was pushing the barrow round and round the house.

"That is the heaviest and most menial employment I can devise for her," said Helen; "I wish there were something worse. She grows more impudent every day, but this is the first time she has dared to exert her snaky power upon a white person in my presence. How did you feel while you were under that spell?"

"Now, Helen, for Heaven's sake don't imagine——"

"I imagine nothing," she interrupted, in a low voice. "I know that girl. She can do strange things. If ever human creature was possessed of a devil, she is."

"Why, Helen!"

She went on, without heeding my astonishment: "Every negro on the plantation, except Lucas, is mortally afraid of her. My birds cower in a corner of their cage if she approaches them, the gentlest horse we have will rear and kick at sight of her, and if she goes into the poultry-yard the hens cover up their chicks as if night had come. She has affected others as she did you. She has done worse. When I first came here, she was given to me for a maid; but, not liking her, I took, instead, a little mulatto girl, who was bright and smart then, but who is now idiotic through fear of Asenath."

I did not think it best to dispute with Helen, knowing her well enough to be sure that any argument I could adduce against her belief she had already weighed and found wanting. She was not a superstitious woman, nor a hasty one, but one whose very mistakes deserved respect, since she always took that course of action which she believed to be wisest and best, even if it were to her own disadvantage. I simply asked:

"Why do you not get rid of her?"

"I have tried, but something frustrates every effort

Lucas, the gardener, followed.

of that kind. Robert objects to sale—it is unusual on the plantation. We once offered her her freedom if she would go away; but she only looked as if she scorned the freedom we could give, and laughed in a way that chilled my blood."

"She seems very insolent."

"Insolent—that is a weak word! I sometimes think she is birth-marked with impudence as she is with straight hair."

"That hair, then, is a birth-mark? I thought it must be a wig."

"She was born with it and with an insane craving to be white. When a child, she used to scream and shriek over her blackness for hours at a time. Mother Glen whipped that out of her."

"It is a pity she did not whip out some of her other peculiarities."

"Mother Glen was much to blame for some of them. You knew Paul Glen, and what a strange, silent being he was—always absorbed in some mysterious pursuits, roving from one lost region to another, coming home now and then for a day and leaving, as if for a short time, to be heard of again after months of inquiry in Hyderabad, or Jerusalem, or the heart of Guinea. Well, after he came home the last time he made Asenath the subject of numerous psychological experiments. He could mesmerise anyone—what other gifts he had was not known; but he called mesmerism child's play.

"Mother Glen did not object to his making this use of the girl, because she did not wish to cross Paul and have him go away again. It is my belief that Asenath discovered, through some of his experiments, the existence of an occult power in herself. Before long she had Paul completely under her control. I had not yet come

here, but Mother Glen told me about it, and that any effort to break the spell made Paul completely furious. He taught her to read, and to sing, and obeyed her in everything—think of it. After a while he fell ill, but it was thought not dangerously. Asenath nursed him, and he would not eat or drink unless she bade him."

"That, though, may have been a mere whim, such as the sick often take."

She shook her head. "You have not heard all. Two of the servants—Mammy Clara and Belinda—declare that they overheard Asenath forbid Paul ever to touch food again, and tell him that she would pretend to bid him eat, but he must not do so. And it is certainly true that he at last refused all sustenance and died of starvation."

"What a horrible idea!"

"Shortly before Paul was stricken down," Helen proceeded, "he disposed of all his property—it was in securities of various kinds—and we have never been able to find out what he did with the money he received. Thousands and thousands of pounds took wing somehow. It was never brought here, so she could not have stolen it actually, but I am as sure that Asenath knows where that money is as I am that I live."

"Now Helen, be sensible, do."

"Mother Glen was a sensible woman, and she believed as I do. She said the girl was uncanny. Moreover she declared to me that Asenath had set out to conquer her as she did Paul, and that it was only by constant resistance that she prevented her from gaining her object. There was a psychic contest between them. Mother Glen's brain was in a condition of seige for months. It could not stand the strain. She was seized with paralysis and died. I blame Asenath for her death."

I did not say much in reply. My odd experience of a few minutes before puzzled me. Helen's account of the girl threw a weird light upon what I felt bound, as a reasonable man, to consider merely curious phenomena, subjective in character and due to some unexplained physical cause. I determined to say a few decided words to Robert Glen about the culpability of allowing his delicate wife to contend with such an annoyance, as Asenath, if not a sorceress, certainly was a fractious and troublesome servant.

"It is strange that Robert does not remove her," said I.

Helen's face flushed and was drawn by a momentary spasm. She looked at me in troubled silence as if she could not decide to say what she wished to tell me.

"I am afraid about Robert," she said at length, almost in a whisper; "there is something in that girl's demeanour to him that it sickens me to think of—and which I dare not try to explain, even to myself. It seems impossible that she can dare to think that he——" She went on hurriedly after a pause: "You see, he believes in no psychic powers and is not on his guard. He calls her unearthly pranks mere mischief that a few years' discipline will take out of her. Robert intends her to marry Lucas."

She spoke the last sentence quite loudly, and, as the girl and her driver were passing by the window, they overheard Lucas, a squat, stolid-looking mulatto, with a face like that of a satiated animal, chuckle and poke at Asenath with the gad.

The girl stopped. She threw down her burden, flung back her head, and turned upon Helen a wild and vicious stare. Her face, streaming with perspiration, was full of threat. She gasped for breath from emotion or the heaviness of her toil. She raised one hand, wiped her brow with its open palm, and flung the drops of sweat in a shower at Helen.

"May every drop burn you!" she said, between her laboured breaths.

Helen looked at her with quiet scorn. "Go on, Lucas," she said calmly.

Asenath shook herself like a chained animal. She ground her teeth and turned upon Lucas in fury, as if she would rend him. He did not quail, but raised his gad threateningly and pointed to the barrow-handles, and, after a momentary struggle with herself, the girl took them up and went on, panting under her toil.

"She shall continue that until she drops," said my sister.

We followed again.

"But, Helen, that surely is cruel."

"Not more so than drawing the fangs of a snake. I have discovered that she is physically powerless when physically exhausted. All the negroes on the place know this and are rejoicing now—they all feel more secure for knowing that she has been disciplined."

While she was speaking, I saw Robert Glen coming along the walk to the house. Helen saw him, too. Leaning out of the window, she called to Lucas and bade him take his charge "to the old barn." He hurriedly departed, driving the girl—who now seemed doubly unwilling to drag her load—literally like an ox, and very unsparing of the gad.

Robert greeted me cordially; but it was evident to me that there was a cloud between his wife and him. His ruddy face assumed a stern expression when he looked at her, and his voice had a hard tone when he addressed her. Her manner to him had an appealing, almost fawning, air, which it distressed me to see.

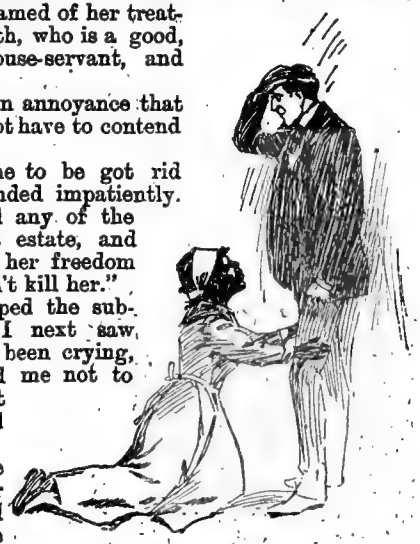
It was some days before I found a chance to speak to Robert on the subject of the girl, I had better have held my tongue, for he was nettled in an instant, shrugged his shoulders, and curled his lip.

"You English people know nothing whatever about the management of slaves. Helen leads that girl the life of a toad under a harrow, because the other darkies say she 'hoodoos' them, and because my mother had some irrational ideas about demoniacal possession. I declare to you, Tom, that if I did not know Helen's delicate condition and nervousness were much to blame, I should be ashamed of her treatment of Asenath, who is a good, well-trained house-servant, and valuable."

"But she is an annoyance that Helen should not have to contend with now."

"How is she to be got rid of?" he demanded impatiently. "We never sell any of the people on this estate, and she won't take her freedom as a gift. I can't kill her."

Then I dropped the subject. When I next saw Helen, she had been crying, and she begged me not to speak to Robert about the girl again.



"Oh, Massa Tom, she am witched."

I saw no more of Asenath for some time, and learnt that she had been put steadily to work at the loom the day following my arrival.

One morning news came that the loom-house had been entered in the night, all the yarn carried off, the woven cloth cut to pieces, and the loom and wheels so shattered that new ones would be necessary. Even the walls of the building were half destroyed.

"This is some of Asenath's work," said Helen.

Robert, who had been annoyed by the news, now seemed additionally so.

"Pshaw, Helen!" he said sharply; "it would take the strength of several men to do some of this mischief."

"She has it at command. Lucas shall take her in hand again."

"No, we will have no more of that," Robert said sternly. "Now, hear me, Helen, I have told Lucas that if he obeys you in that respect again he shall be flogged within an inch of his life, and I mean it."

Helen's face turned very white, her hands fell into her lap, and she sat as if stricken helpless and hopeless. I hastened away to avoid hearing more, comprehending now what the trouble in my sister's life was, and with a presentiment of coming evil that it would be greater.

It was that very night, that, having strolled into the shrubbery to smoke my cigar, I fell asleep upon a rustic bench there and awoke to find it was late at night with the wind moaning as if a storm were brewing in the cloudy heavens.

As I arose to go to the house, something—that was not visible—seemed to come from every quarter at once and smite me. I felt a sharp, electric thrill followed by a sensation as if I had been flung from a height and raised up again, with some of my faculties benumbed by the fall. My hair stood up, but I felt no fear, only a passive wonder, mixed with expectation. Turning, I saw, by a transient gleam of moonlight, the girl Asenath, standing in the path near by, pointing at me with a long slender rod. The ray passed and left a black shadow there, which moved slowly away, beckoning to me. I followed.

The shadow led me out of the shrubbery and along the wide avenue between the two rows of huts occupied by the negroes, and ended at the big house. I had no will or thought but to follow it exactly. It stopped before one of the huts, and bent itself nearly double. I, too, bent over involuntarily, and every muscle of my body seemed to become strung. The perspiration started out of me, and my will was like a bar of steel ending in great fingers, which grasped something and pulled upon it with such force that my inner self was a-tremble with weakness when the tension relaxed, which it did at the opening of the cottage door and the coming out of a little lad—a mere child—who looked ghastly as one of the dead walking. He placed himself beside me, and together we followed the shadowy woman to another house, dragged at the invisible cords of another human soul, and brought it out into the night. It was a woman, this time in the scantiest of night-robes.

And so we went on, stopping at every door, and from every door someone came forth, except from that of Lucas. There, grasp as it would, the steel fingers clutched nothing and the door remained shut.

The woman Asenath muttered to herself, and all the crowd of followers muttered, too. With them, my own lips formed words, of which I did not then comprehend the meaning: "Soulless beast!" We went on beyond the quarters, stopped at the big house, and dragged at something that resisted with all its strength, which was weaker than ours, for it yielded at last, and came slowly, slowly down the steps and stood among us. It was my sister Helen.

Asenath laughed, and ghastly laughter broke from all, even from Helen herself.

I had no feeling of compassion for her, nor of fear for her or myself, but was simply a force which another exerted. The wills of those who followed Asenath were but strands in the cable of her power, and their strength was in her hands for good or ill.

We followed again—out of the plantation, through a forest of pines, over a bridge that spanned slow-crawling black water, past a fallen church surrounded by forgotten graves, to the top of a hill where there were stones laid in the form of a serpent—a great stone, like open jaws, forming the head. There Asenath paused and cast down her rod. She stretched out her hands, and in a moment we were formed into a circle about the rod.

And then once again those fingers of steel grasped something—something that all their strength seemed unable to move. Our breath came in gasps, our forms shook like the leaves of the aspen-tree, and in the heart was a fear, too great to be measured, of failure. Long, long the effort lasted—lasted until the will seemed to discard its own puerile strength and to fling itself upon the bosom of impersonal force, seize the reservoir of the universal will, and turn its power in a mighty stream upon the burden of one desire—one unyielding demand that the door be opened. And with that borrowed force came the sense of unlimited strength. Faith was born.

We stretched out our arms in gestures of which I can only remember that they were first those of invitation, then of welcome. Nature began to pulsate. There was a sound like the slow, regular beating of a heart, in the chambers of which we were inclosed. The inner life throbbed with it so fiercely that the blood seemed almost to leap from my body. All about us were the move-

ments of awakening birds and insects; from afar came the lowing of kine, the crowing of cocks, and the crying of children, as if they were suddenly startled into fear.

In the centre of the circle appeared a square of strange light.

We looked upon it, and beheld a place of which the darkness and the light of this world are but the envelopes. We saw there, afar off, a vast crystalline globe, from which extended, in all directions, millions of filaments of clear light. The globe scintillated as a diamond does, and its sparks floated away upon the endless filaments of light. Nearer to us, moving about, were beings not human, and not resembling each other further than that they were all gigantic and all possessed of some human attributes. Some were beautiful, some hideous.

Upon some the writing was fantastic, as if put on in mockery. Upon others it shone with a clear and cruel radiance that pained the sight. Some bore it faded and dim, as if the pretension it set up had fallen like a leaf into the stream of the ages and been almost forgotten.

A great fear fell upon us all, so great that all, except the woman Asenath and myself, fell down and seemed as if dead. The woman trembled and murmured to herself, and again my lips formed her words.

"Is it worth while, when human desires are so poor, human life so short?"

Through that door there floated not a voice, for the silence was only broken by a faint, soft hum, like very distant music, but an unspoken command that impressed itself upon the spirit.

"Speak!"

Still the woman hesitated. Suddenly her lips moved again, mine following them:

"But only through this can he be won."

"I would have the desire of my heart," she said aloud.

"It is thine," was the silent answer; "to him who knocks at this door shall it be opened, and what he asks for there shall he receive, whether for good or ill. It is the law."

"I would be fair, like those who enslave me. All that she has"—she pointed to my sister—"I would take from her and have for my own."

"The power to obtain thy will is thine, whether thou be of the just or of the unjust. The spirit which commands shall be obeyed. It is the law."

"And is there a penalty to be paid?"

"Thy act is the seed from which its penalty shall grow."

The woman sighed.

"What penalty?"

"Thou knowest the law."

Sighing again bitterly, Asenath stretched out her hand. The square of light went out. Across the spot where it had been drifted an indistinct form which passed into invisibility on either side. Under their feet ran a serpent of fire, which leapt at the woman. She grasped it, and it seemed to become the rod she had cast down.

I remembered nothing more until I came slowly to myself, stretched upon the bench in the shrubbery, with the morning sun shining into my face. My limbs were stiff, my head ached, and my heart was heavy with a foreboding of evil. It was impossible for me to decide whether the experience of the night was a dream or a reality, but I was sorely troubled; I could not think of Asenath without a creeping of the flesh.

On approaching the house, I saw Robert standing in the doorway. My first glimpse of him set me to trembling with fear of evil tidings, he looked so agitated and distressed. When he perceived me, he wrung his hands and burst into tears.

"Oh, Tom!" he cried, "Helen is dying. She was taken with convulsions early this morning. She does not know me. The baby was born dead, and Helen cannot live. I must lose her! Oh, God, I must lose her!"

He ran through the hall and up the stairs like a wild man. I followed, but the heaviness of the shock was so great that it was but slowly and with a feeling as if the floor were rising up to my face. Asenath was moving stealthily about the hall. I bade her begone. She looked at me like a startled cat, but did not go. A black girl, coming down the stairs, passed me, and I recognised her as the first of the women who had joined our ghastly crowd the night before. She gazed straight before her, with wide-open, horrified eyes, and her face had the same pinched look the hall mirror had shown upon my own as I glanced into it involuntarily when passing it. At the top of the stairs, Belinda, Helen's poor little maid, flung herself at my feet and clasped my knees.

"Oh, Massa Tom," she cried, "she am witched. Go an' git d'witch t'—tak'—de spell off'n her. Nuffin'll save her ef yo' don't do dat."

As I stopped to put the poor creature aside, old Mammy Clara, her face streaming with tears, came up to me.

"Massa Tom," she said solemnly, "de good God hab tooken Miss Helen. She's in Heben wid her li'l baby."

The blow overcame me. It will be best to pass over that time. I shut myself into my room and bore my agony alone, I went once more into the room where Helen lay, and looked at her face. It was the face of one in peaceful rest, but it had aged twenty years in twelve hours. Her maids, directed by Mrs. Grayson, an old friend of the family, were ready to prepare her for the grave.

He threw himself at her feet.

"They think," whispered Mrs. Grayson, "that she had walked in her sleep. Her feet are scratched and torn, as if she had been among briars barefooted, and the doctors say that her convulsions probably came on from the shock of awakening. She was found at daybreak, unconscious, in the hall, and the outer door was wide open."

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I left the plantation a few days after the funeral, and for years neither saw nor heard directly from Robert Glen. I never could forgive his indifference to Helen's peace of mind while she lived, nor get over a certain disgust with which his lack of self-control at the time of her death inspired me. I never liked him, and, after that sad time, I had less regard for him than ever. I never told him the story I have written. He would only have pronounced me mad, and I did not wish to obtain that reputation for the mere sake of warning him.

Besides, I tried to believe the experience of that night a dream, but I found that impossible, and was always looking for a sequel to it. The sequel came in its appointed time.

Years passed away. At the outbreak of the Civil War, the Graysons came to England. From them I learnt that Asenath had disappeared from the plantation long before, and was supposed to have drowned herself in the black creek and to haunt the plantation in the form of a black-and-white snake. Dr. Grayson blamed himself for her death.

"Some of the Glen negroes," he said; "told some of mine that the girl was turning white, and that, with the exception of her face and hands, her whole body had changed its colour. Now I had heard of such cases, but never had seen one, and, in spite of what Buffon and other naturalists say on the subject, felt doubtful of the possibility of such a thing taking place. I rode over to Glen's one day to investigate the matter. Glen was not at home; but, presuming upon old friendship with him, I saw the girl and told her the object of my call.

"I wish you had seen her; she flew into an outrageous passion, calling me vile names; said there was not a white spot on her person, and that if I touched her it should cost me dear. Of course I paid no attention to her threats, and called that Lucas of Glen's to help me turn up her sleeves. Her arms really were white, but before I could half examine them, she broke away from us and tore out of the house.

"We followed, but lost sight of her in the shrubbery, and to this day she has never been seen again. The negroes say she drowned herself. Glen, when he returned, seemed to believe so. He took me to task in a most ungentlemanly manner for what had happened, and we have not been on speaking terms since. He has now gone abroad until this little squall blows over, I hear."

"I trust that he may—and longer," I said. The doctor chuckled a little and changed the subject. In secret, I said to myself:

"I don't believe the girl is dead, and I do believe that Robert Glen knows where she is. The sequel will come."

A year later, Robert returned home, bringing a wife with him. He wrote me a formal announcement of his marriage, to which I replied with equal formality.

It was rumoured that the new wife was rich in her own right; that she was of English parentage, but born and reared in Calcutta. Later, I heard that Robert's old neighbours had not taken to her at all, and that she had an ungovernable temper, being unable to keep any servant, except a couple of East Indian women, whom she berated continually in their own tongue, but who could not speak English enough to impart any information about their mistress to her neighbours.

The year after Robert's marriage, while in America, I accepted an invitation to spend a few days with the Graysons. Feeling that I owed Robert the courtesy of a call, I rode over to the plantation, not so much to discharge a social duty as to see the new Mrs. Glen, about whom I noticed, on the part of the Graysons, a marked reluctance to speak.

They edged away from the subject, when I brought it up, with nervous looks at each other.

Leaving my horse at the outer gate, I walked along the wide avenue nearly to the house. There was a spectral stillness upon the place. Sadness exhaled from everything, to be drawn in with every breath. The old servants were all gone. I had met the once sleek and stolid Lucas, now rheumatic and ragged, begging in the village.

Belinda was in the county asylum, and the others were scattered or dead. The scent of the lilac was gone from the air—the very bushes were rooted up, and lay, sere and dead, by little heaps of earth. A triangular cloud in the sky cast upon the earth a triangle of shadow, in the midst of which Robert Glen's home lay as if it were entranced. No sign of happy life met me; but as I turned aside to look at a certain bench in the shrubbery, a black-and-white snake ran over my foot.

I went no further. A woman was seated upon the bench—a fair woman, with hair like dull copper reflecting sullen fire, with a face and form perfect as those of the goddesses of old, a face which betokened an indomitable soul, which knew the secret of the power wielded by the gods. She was bending over her clasped hands, her face was turned aside in an attitude of eager waiting and wore a smile that transfigured it. Slowly approaching her, walking as a man walks in his sleep, came Robert Glen. He threw himself at her feet and laid his head upon her knee. She bent to him with a little rapturous caress, and both faces were as happy as those of the people in Paradise.

I turned and went away from the place, and entered its precincts no more. From that hour I was self-devoted to one purpose—to seek the knowledge that should open the door to her degradation and destruction. In the midst of her success, and in the height of her pride, she should turn black as she was in the day when Lucas drove her. I swore it. So should my friends and my sister, whom she robbed and slew, be avenged.

MARIE ROBERTS.

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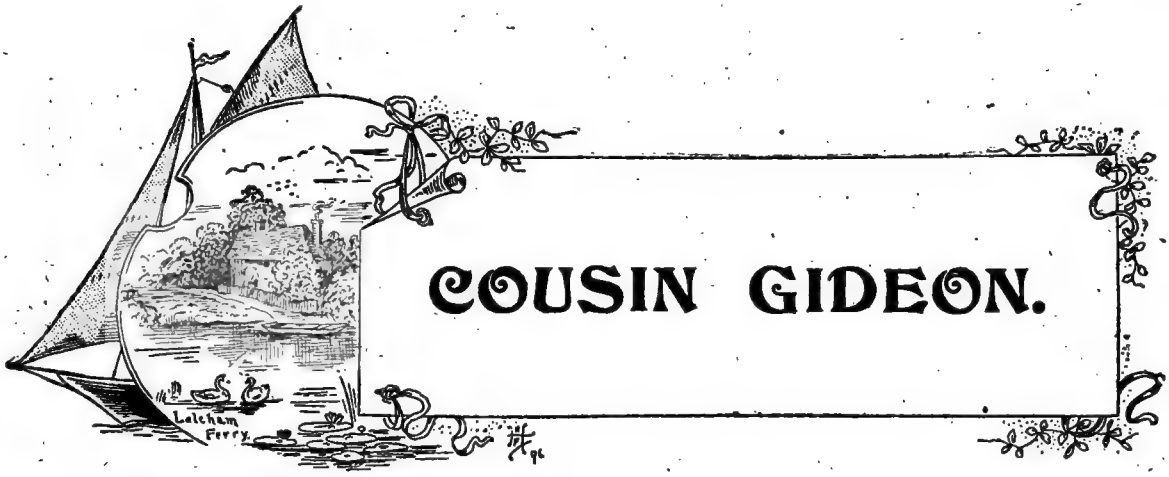

COUSIN GIDEON.

No, I'm not a spiritualist; I never was educated well enough to study the occult sciences, as you call them. But I had an experience some years ago which, perhaps, *you* can explain, as you believe in such things. I have only told it to a few friends, and they looked as if they thought I was telling lies. But I'm a truthful man, and never told a lie in my life except once, and that was when I told my wife that she was the only woman who had ever attracted me. I owned up to that lie during the honeymoon. A friend of mine met us, and not knowing I was married, he clapped me on the shoulder and cried:

"You know how to find the pretty ones, my boy. Ha, ha! *That's* all right!"

But it wasn't all right. However, that was soon settled.

Well, I was going to tell you about Cousin Gideon; and I may say here that I can bring witnesses to prove that it's true. He wasn't my cousin; that was the name he went by in our neighbourhood. There were two cousins, Gideon and Simeon, both old men. Their mothers were Jewesses, I believe, but their fathers were not, and the cousins were nothing in particular that I know of.

They were in very different circumstances. Simeon was always well dressed; his clothes were of good material, and fitted well. Gideon was poor; he wore a greasy frock-coat, threadbare, torn, and much too long for him. It was given to him by some kind neighbour. The heels of his boots were worn so much on one side that I used to wonder sometimes how he managed to walk in them.

He had a room in the cottage of a man I knew a mason. It was sheer benevolence on the part of this man, for I don't suppose Cousin Gideon paid any rent. He earnt a little somehow, but hardly enough to keep body and soul together. Simeon occupied a house in a good street, and had a lot of fine people come to him. That was to borrow money, not for his society. He was an ugly little man, with ears like a bat, a yellow skin full of wrinkles and blotches, dirty grey hair, and swollen, cracked lips. Only twice did Simeon call on his Cousin Gideon while alive, and I am going to tell you about those visits. If they happened to meet in the street, Simeon passed his poor relation without making a sign.

Cousin Gideon had two or three pieces of furniture which he had inherited from his mother. One of these was a chest which must have been centuries old; it was a massive thing, beautifully carved, with a big, strong lock and a heavy key. The lock and key were very ornamental, and the whole thing was what you might see in an exhibition of antique furniture. This chest was worth a fair amount of money; Gideon knew that, but he had never attempted to part with it.

Simeon knew the value of the chest, and that was the object of his visit. He wanted to purchase it, not to assist his relative in any way, but because he thought he could do a good stroke of business. He knew people who would give a lot of money for it, and as Gideon was certain to be in great straits in the winter time, he believed the poor man would jump at the offer of a few pounds. So he climbed up the narrow staircase into the back room—a miserable place with sloping roof, broken walls, and a window that would not shut properly—and he stood before Cousin Gideon and offered him five pounds. But the owner wouldn't hear of it.

Simeon offered five shillings more, and ten shillings more, and kept raising the price; but the more he offered the more determined Gideon seemed that he would not sell. At last he told Simeon flatly that he would sooner starve and freeze than let him have it; and the money-lender went away reviling and swearing, while Cousin Gideon, usually such an inoffensive old man, danced and laughed with unaccountable energy.

Only a few days afterwards the old man fell ill. He became delirious, saw his own shadow on the wall, and talked all sorts of stuff about the old chest and Cousin Simeon and what not.

I went to see him, and sat up with him an hour or two just to give my friend a rest. The mason was a widower, and Gideon wanted attention in the daytime, to say nothing of better food, so I advised my friend to call on Simeon and tell him. And Simeon made his second call.

I was there when he came. He made his way to the bed, sat down on the edge, and looked at the sick man, who was half conscious, half delirious.

"Well, Cousin Gideon," he said.

The sound of his voice seemed to bring Gideon to himself with a start.

"What do *you* want?" he asked.

"He, he! What do I want?" sniggered the money-lender. "I've come to see how you are, *dear* Cousin

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Gideon. He, he! You'll sell me the chest *now*, won't you? You have no use for it. The money will buy you medicine and food and get you a fire." He got off the bed and went to the chest. "The money will make you quite well again. If you don't sell the chest, you'll die of cold and hunger and—— Yes, you will!"

Gideon raised himself slowly in the bed. His breath came with difficulty, his eyes glowed like red-hot coals.

"You shall never have it!" he said passionately. "Never! You have seen me hungry, thirsty, cold—many times—and you have never helped me! You know that my mother was the sister of your mother; you know that my mother performed the last offices for your mother before she was laid in her coffin——"

"He, he! Don't take on so, Cousin Gideon. I'll see that the same is done for you—I will! But you'll sell me the chest? It will give you food to keep you alive. Besides, it will come to me anyhow after your death, because I'm the next of kin!"

"Never!" screamed Gideon, his passion giving him strength. "And if you dare to lay a finger on anything of mine—*even if I'm dead, I'll stop you!*" And he fell back exhausted.

A shivery feeling went over me at his last words. Simeon looked at him contemptuously, glanced at the chest, and went out.

The end came that night. My friend and I were both in the room. Gideon had been talking wildly; suddenly he lifted himself on his elbow, and pointed to the chest.

"I told him—I told him——" His eyes glowed again. He strove to say something else, but it ended in a wild cry, and he fell back dead!

The third day after Gideon's death was a holiday, and we had arranged to bury him on that day. No news had been sent to Simeon, but in the morning, just as the man had come to screw down the coffin, in came the old rascal.

"So he's dead, eh? Well, he was very foolish. I offered him money for it, and he wouldn't take it. It would have saved his life. I told him so! How much will the funeral cost? What? Too much, a great deal too much! I suppose I must pay it." (We hadn't asked him; we had done it as cheaply as possible, on purpose.) "I shall have to take the chest for it!"

We didn't answer him, and he walked into the back-room where Cousin Gideon lay. We were in the front room, the door was wide open, and Simeon left the door of the back-room ajar. We had an idea at first that one of us had better follow him, but we decided to leave him to his own thoughts.

While we were waiting, we were startled by the sound of a voice in the other room. My friend, the mason, looked at me and I looked at him. It wasn't Simeon's voice! We listened again, and we both said "Gideon!" in a scared whisper. You may say we were mistaken, but we knew the tone of his voice too well. We listened again, and all of us in that front room heard these words:

"My mother was the sister of your mother; you know that my mother performed the last offices for your mother before she was laid in her coffin——"

We sat horror-stricken. Then we heard a cry that chilled us to the marrow—a cry such as I cannot describe. I hope I shall never hear such a cry again. Then the sound of a body falling. We rushed in and saw Simeon on the floor, bleeding from a wound in the head. We took him into the other room and sent for the doctor. When we went to the coffin again we found that there was a change in the position of the dead man!

What took place in that room? Simeon went mad, and is now in an asylum in Vienna. He constantly raves that Cousin Gideon rose from the dead and threatened him as he was touching the chest. He never says one single word on any other subject. Was Gideon only in a trance? Or what? I do not know, but perhaps you spiritualists can explain such things, or may be able to some day. I have related facts, for I'm a truthful man, and have only told one lie in my life—you know about *that*.

GEO. DAY

PICK-ME-UP,

The BRIGHTEST, SMARTEST and DAINTIEST

Penny Illustrated Paper

OF THE DAY.

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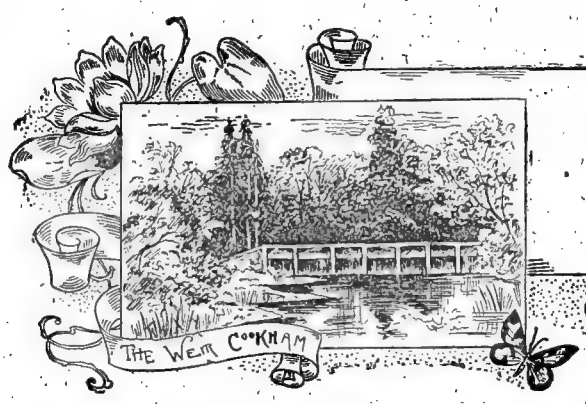

The Dead Wife.

Hélène had married Paul de Chavannes, a widower of thirty, and already father of two children. The younger was only a few months old when it became an orphan.

During three years the father and his little ones had mourned the wife and mother, the children dressed in black, Paul lost in the memory of the past. On all the walls of the house hung portraits, showing her living, some as a young girl, fair, with deep, candid eyes, others, the young wife in ball dress, or outdoor costume, covered in velvet and furs.

And in all—despite the smile of the fresh lips—the sunken eyes, bordered with lilac, told of hidden suffering, and seemed to hold a sad presentiment that all this happiness would be brief.

Since he had become a widower, Paul had never passed an evening nor taken a meal out of his own house.

Seated at table, between his babies' two tall chairs, he gazed sadly at the empty place in front. But that moment was not without its consolations. He suffered more when forced to go where duty and business called him, when he shut the door on the last "adieu" of the little voices.

Paul remembered that he did not leave with them a tender mother, watching their play and ever ready to sympathise in the sudden despairs and quick repentances of childhood.

So, against his own wishes, he began once more to think of building a home. His choice, made calmly and without passion, fell on Hélène, an old playmate, almost of his own age, quiet, and who, it was said, had remained unmarried because of some mistaken love of irreparable loss.

"Since Hélène has mourned," thought Chavannes, "her heart will be less exacting than another's, more open to pity. She will not expect me to pretend a passion which I can feel no more. She will appreciate my respect for her secret, my gratitude for the affection which she will bear for my children."

And he married Hélène, never dreaming that he himself was the man she adored.

So Hélène entered his house, in place of her whom she had so greatly envied.

Joy shone in her eyes and illumined her face. She forgot that Paul had wished less to take another wife than to give a mother to his own children.

"His heart," she thought, "has been so cruelly frozen by the bitterness of parting that he has no more confidence in love. That is all. The wound must be left to heal."

She had feared, on entering the house, to be confronted everywhere with memories of the dead woman—on the walls, in the decoration of the rooms, the arrangement of the furniture, the colour of the hangings—but with a delicacy which charmed his bride, the widower had effaced from his dwelling every souvenir of the past.

Hélène could have believed herself the first mistress of that house, had it not been for Paul's melancholy and the presence of the two children.

She forced herself to love them, caressed them with assumed tenderness, only wishing through them to reach their father's heart, now happy in spoiling them to please Paul, then miserable to think that in them he kept alive his love for his lost wife, and her heart jealously reproached Chavannes with an incurable sadness, a vague mystery in his conduct.

Wearied with this faith to a memory, to an intangible phantom with which she could not combat, Hélène began to wish her husband to fall under some other influence, which, if more dangerous, would at least be material. This wish gave a kind of comfort, and soon she began to believe it true. She set spies on her husband and found out that every day, at a certain hour, he visited a house, always the same. She went there.

The building, let in flats, had not the appearance of an office. Standing on the pavement, Hélène asked herself, with anguish, what secret was hidden behind the drawn curtains of the high windows. Sure of treachery, she felt so profoundly wounded that, for a moment, she thought of throwing herself under the wheels of a passing waggon.

But curiosity and anger proved the victors. She was consumed by an ardent desire to know—to avenge so many tears shed in secret—and, who could tell? perhaps to crush Paul with the shame of his deceit, with the magnanimity of a pardon from which would spring gratitude and love.

She crossed the courtyard, entered the concierge's lodge, and asked falteringly:

"Has M. de Chavannes been here?"

The man looked at Hélène with surprise. She thought: "He is bribed. My visit has been foreseen. He will tell me a lie."

But the concierge, after glancing at the clock, replied: "We have not yet seen him to-day, and now it is a little late for him to come. However, it is not impossible. If madame wishes to await him she must ascend to the

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second stage, first door to the left. My wife is lighting M. de Chavanne's fire."

Hélène went up to the second storey. All the left side of the building was occupied by bachelors' apartments. She said to herself: "Paul has hired an apartment here to receive a mistress secretly. I will go in and wait. Perhaps he or she will come. They will find me ready."

She was so overcome that she had scarcely strength to pull the bell.

"M. de Chavánnes," said she to the woman who opened the door, "will probably be here soon, or perhaps——"

She hesitated, then continued in a lower voice and very quickly:

"Or, perhaps it may be another person—a lady. Do not say that I am here. I want to surprise him," and she forced herself to smile, so as to reassure the woman, who retired.

When she was alone in the ante-room Hélène thought she was going to faint.

One minute she stood irresolute, holding the handle of the door. At last she entered.

Immediately she recognised the blue hangings fringed with silver, and the Louis Quinze furniture. It was the boudoir of the first Mme. de Chavannes. She had already seen it once, years before, when she had come with her mother to pay a wedding visit to the young wife, who, not being in good health, had received them there, reclining on a lounge.

She had not forgotten a single detail of that first and last visit. Here she found arranged, just as before, the table, the chairs, and the lounge. Near at hand, on a bracket, was placed a small mirror, and in a Sèvres vase a bunch of fresh violets. It was Paul doubtless who had brought them, and before that delicate token of affection for the dead, Hélène felt her heart seized with a jealousy far more violent than if she had indeed found there the proofs of a baser love.

She burst into tears and sank to the ground.

She wept for a long time, sobbing violently like a hurt child, her head leaning against the bed on which the other had died. She could hear the noises of the street, at the same time distinct and confused; the throbbing of her temples mingled with the tic-tac of the clock.

All at once she heard a sound of footsteps in the corridor, near the door. She felt a mad terror at the thought that perhaps Paul would come in to find her there, to reproach her bitterly with having sought out his secret, and sullied by horrible suspicions his love beyond the tomb.

She got up. The footsteps passed the door, mounted to the flat above, and were lost.

Her eyes fell on a portrait of her rival, which, pallid like an apparition, seemed to watch her grief.

For a moment Hélène regarded the portrait without anger. Its dead and pitying look fell from the picture into the heart of the sorrowful wife like balm. Hélène sat down at the table. In a drawer which she opened was a roll of paper, tied with blue ribbon. She opened it, and, with a beating heart, still shaken by her sobs, she read:

"Last pages of my diary."

And beneath these words, written by a hand trembling with weakness:

"These are the last words I shall ever write. I feel that the end is near. The doctor gives me no more medicine, my dear Paul never leaves me, and the other day he forbade my old nurse to enter my room because he found her weeping at the foot of the bed."

Hélène, leaning on the table, read greedily, her eyes burning with tears, her bosom heaving. She read—her anger turned to tender pity—the pages in which the dying woman expressed her love and her wishes for those she must leave behind. But all at once, under the reader's eyes, and through her blinding tears, the words became dim and confused.

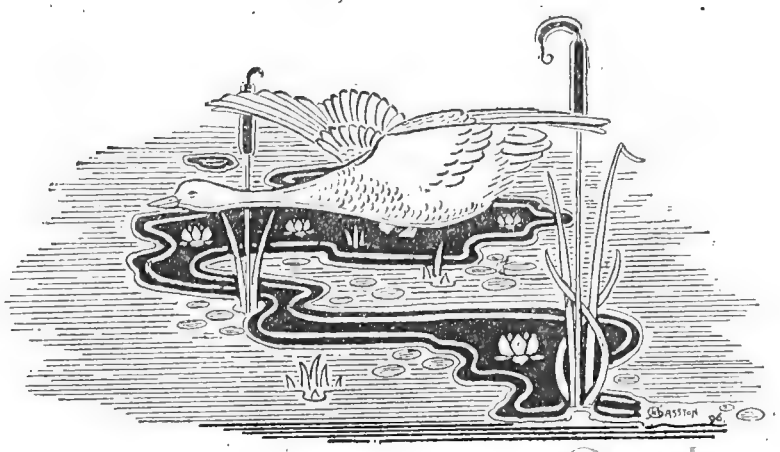
"Paul, my dear Paul," said the last lines of the diary, "you are too young to go through life alone, and above all, to bring up the babies I leave you. Some day, not too soon, but some day, you must take another wife. I wish it, I entreat it—only choose her such as I would have chosen, and oh! may she never quite banish me from your heart, and the memory of my little ones."

Hélène rose, shaking in every limb, and approaching the bed—the place where the dead woman had laid her head for the last time—she hid her face in the draperies and sobbed:

"Oh, no! I swear it—I swear it!"

Then she lowered her veil, and went out, after having, with trembling hands, removed all traces of her presence, so that Paul should never know of her visit.

G. M. Rigler.



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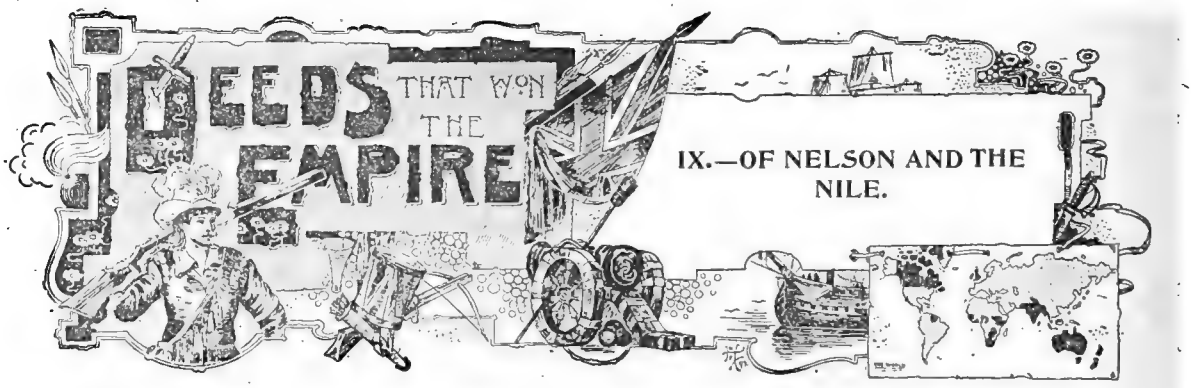

IX.—OF NELSON AND THE NILE.

Aboukir Bay resembles nothing so much as a piece bitten out of the Egyptian pancake—a crescent-shaped bay, patchy with shoals, stretching from the Rosetta mouth of the Nile to Aboukir, or, as it is now called, Nelson Island, that island being simply the outer point of a sandbank that projects from the western horn of the bay.

Flat shores, grey-blue Mediterranean waters, two horns of land six miles apart, that to the north projecting furthest and forming a low island—this, ninety-eight years ago, was the scene of what might almost be described as the greatest sea-fight in history.

On the evening of August 1st, 1798, thirteen great battle-ships lay drawn up in a single line parallel with the shore, and as close to it as the sand-banks permitted. The head ship was almost stem on to the shoal, which, running out at right angles to the shore, forms Aboukir Island.

The nose of each succeeding ship was exactly 160 yards from the stern of the ship before it, and, allowing for one or two gaps, each ship was bound by a great cable to its neighbour. It was a thread of beads, only each "bead" was a battle-ship, whose decks swarmed with brave men, and from whose sides gaped the iron lips of more than a thousand heavy guns.

The line was not exactly straight. It formed a very obtuse angle, the projecting point at the centre being formed by the *Orient*, the biggest warship at that moment afloat, a giant of 120 guns.

Next to her came the *Franklin*, of 80 guns, a vessel which, if not the biggest, was perhaps the finest sample of naval architecture in existence. The line of ships was more than one mile and a half long, and consisted of the gigantic flagship, three ships of the line of 80 guns, and nine of 74 guns. In addition, it had a fringe of gunboats and frigates, while a battery of mortars on the island guarded, as with a sword of fire, the gap betwixt the headmost ship and the island.

This great fleet had conveyed Napoleon, with 36,000 troops crowded into 400 transports, from France, had captured Malta on the voyage, and three weeks before had safely landed Napoleon and his soldiers in Egypt.

The French Admiral, Bruéys, knew that Nelson was coming furiously in his track, and after a consultation with all his captains he had drawn up his ships in the order which we have described, a position he believed to be unassailable; and at 3 o'clock on the afternoon of August 1st, 1798, his look-outs were eagerly watching the white topsails showing above the sea line, the van of Nelson's fleet.

Napoleon had kept the secret of his Egyptian expedition well, and the great Toulon fleet, with its swarm of transports, had vanished round the coast of Corsica and gone off into mere space so far as a bewildered British Admiralty knew.

A fleet of thirteen 74-gun ships, and one of 50 guns, was placed under Nelson's flag. He was ordered to pursue and destroy the vanished French fleet, and with characteristic energy he set out on one of the most dramatic sea-chases known to history. With the instinct of genius, he guessed that Napoleon's destination was Egypt; but while the French fleet coasted Sardinia, and went to the west of Sicily, Nelson ran down the Italian coast to Naples, called there for information, found none, and, carrying all sail, swept through the straits of Messina.

On the night of June 22nd the two fleets actually crossed each other's tracks. The French fleet, including the transports, numbered 572 vessels, and their lights, it might be imagined, would have lit up many leagues of sea. Yet through this forest of hostile masts, the English fleet, with keen eyes watching at every mast-head, swept and saw nothing.

Nelson, for one thing, had no frigates to serve as eyes and ears for him; his fleet, in sailor-like fashion, formed a compact body, three parallel lines of phantom-like pyramids of canvas sweeping in the darkness across the floor of the sea. Above all a haze filled the night; and it is not too much to say that the drifting grey vapour, which hid the French ships from Nelson's look-out men, changed the face of history.

Nelson used to explain that his ideal of perfect enjoyment would be to have the chance of "trying Bonaparte on a wind"; and if he had caught sound of bell or gleam of lantern from the great French fleet, and brought it to action in the darkness of the foggy night, can anyone doubt what the result would have been?

Nelson would have done off the coast of Sicily on June 22nd, 1798, what Wellington did on June 18th, 1815; and in that case there would have been no Marengo or Austerlitz, no retreat from Moscow, no Peninsular War, and no Waterloo. For so much in distracted human affairs may a patch of drifting vapour count.

Nelson, in a word, over-ran his prey. He reached Alexandria to find the coast empty; doubled back to Sicily, zig-zagging his way by Cyprus and Candia; and twelve hours after he had left Alexandria the topsails of the French fleet hove in sight from that port!

Napoleon's troops were safely landed, and the French Admiral had some four weeks in which to prepare for Nelson's return, and at 3 p.m. on August 1st, the gliding topsails of the *Swiftsure*, about Aboukir Island, showed that the tireless Englishman had, after nearly three months of pursuit, overtaken his enemy.

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The French, if frigates be included, counted seventeen ships to fourteen, and, ship for ship, they had the advantage over the British alike in crew, tonnage, and fire. In size the English ships scarcely averaged 1,500 tons; the French ships exceeded 2,000 tons. Nelson had only 17's, his heaviest gun being a 32-pounder. The average French 80-gun ship in every detail of fighting strength exceeded an English 98, and Bruéys had three such ships in his fleet, while his own flagship, the *Orient*, was fully equal to two English 74's. Its weight of ball on the lower deck alone exceeded that from the whole broadside of the *Bellerophon*, the ship that engaged it. The French, in brief, had an advantage in guns of about 20 per cent., and in men of 30 per cent. Bruéys, moreover, was lying in a carefully chosen position in a dangerous bay, of which his enemies possessed no chart, and the head of his line was protected by a powerful shore-battery.

Nothing in this great fight is more dramatic than the swiftness and vehemence of Nelson's attack. He simply leapt upon his enemy at sight! Four of his ships were miles off in the offing, but Nelson did not wait for them. In the long pursuit he had assembled his captains repeatedly in his cabin, and discussed every possible means of attacking the French fleet. If he found the fleet as he guessed, drawn up in battle-line, close in shore and anchored, his plan was to place one of his ships on the bow, another on the quarter, of each French ship in succession.

It has been debated who actually evolved the idea of rounding the head of the French line, and attacking on both faces. One version is that Foley, in the *Goliath*, who led the British line, owed the suggestion to a keen-eyed middy, who pointed out that the anchor buoy of the headmost French ship was at such a distance from the ship itself as to prove there was room to pass.

But the weight of evidence seems to prove that Nelson himself, as he rounded Aboukir Island, and scanned Bruéy's formation, with that swiftness of glance in which he almost rivalled Napoleon, saw his chance in the gap between the leading French ship and the shore. "Where a French ship can swing," he held, "a British ship can either sail or anchor," and he determined to double on the French line and attack on both faces at once.

He explained his plan to Berry, his captain, who in his delight exclaimed: "If we succeed, what will the world say?" "There is no 'if' in the case," said Nelson; "that we shall succeed is certain; who will live to tell the story is a very different matter."

Bruéys had calculated that the English fleet must come down perpendicularly to his centre, and each ship, in the process, be raked by a line of fire, a mile and a half long; but the moment the English ships rounded the island they tacked, hugged the shore, and swept through the gap between the leading vessel and the land. The British ships were so close to each other that Nelson, speaking from his own quarter-deck, was able to ask Hood, in the *Zealous*, if he thought they had water enough to round the French line. Hood replied that he had no chart, but would lead and take soundings as he went.

So the British line came on, the men on the yards taking in canvas, the leadsmen in the chains coolly calling the soundings. The battery roared from the island, the leading French ships broke into smoke and flame, but the steady British line glided on. The *Goliath* by this time led; and at half-past five the shadow of its tall masts cast by the setting sun fell over the decks of the *Guerrier*, and as Foley, its captain, swept past the Frenchman's bows, he poured in a furious broadside, bore swiftly up, and dropped—as Nelson, with that minute attention to detail which marks a great commander had ordered all his captains—an anchor from the stern, so that, without having to "swing," he was instantly in a fighting position on his enemy's quarter.

Foley, however, dropped his anchor a moment too late, and drifted on to the second ship in the line; but Hood, in the *Zealous*, coming swiftly after, also raked the *Guerrier*, and anchoring from the stern at the exact moment, took the place on its quarter Foley should have taken.

The *Orion* came into battle next, blasted the unfortunate *Guerrier*, whose foremast had already gone, with a third broadside, and swept outside the *Zealous* and *Goliath* down to the third ship on the French line. A French frigate, the *Sérieuse*, of thirty-six guns, anchored inside the French line, ventured to fire on the *Orion* as it swept past, whereupon Saumaurez, its commander, discharged his starboard broadside into that frigate.

The *Sérieuse* reeled under the shock of the British guns, its masts disappeared like chips, and the unfortunate Frenchman went down like a stone; while Saumaurez, lying himself on the larboard bow of the *Franklin* and the quarter of the *Peuple Souvrain*, broke upon them in thunder.

The *Theseus* followed hard in the track of the *Orion*, raked the unhappy *Guerrier* in the familiar fashion while crossing its bows, then swept through the narrow water-lane betwixt the *Goliath* and *Zealous* and their French antagonists, poured a smashing broadside into each French ship as it passed, then shot outside the *Orion*, and anchored with mathematical nicety off the quarter of the *Spartiate*. The water-line was not a pistol-shot wide, and this feat of seamanship was marvellous.

Miller, who commanded the *Theseus*, in a letter to his wife described the fight. "In running along the enemy's line in the wake of the *Zealous* and *Goliath*, I observed," he said, "their shot swept just over us, and knowing well that at such a moment Frenchmen would not have coolness enough to change their elevation, I closed them suddenly, and running under the arch of their shot, reserved my fire, every gun being loaded with two, and some with three, round shot, until I had the *Guerrier's* masts in a line, and her jib-boom about six feet clear of our rigging. We then opened with such effect that a second breath could not be drawn before her main and mizzen-mast were also gone. This was precisely at sunset, or forty-minutes past six."

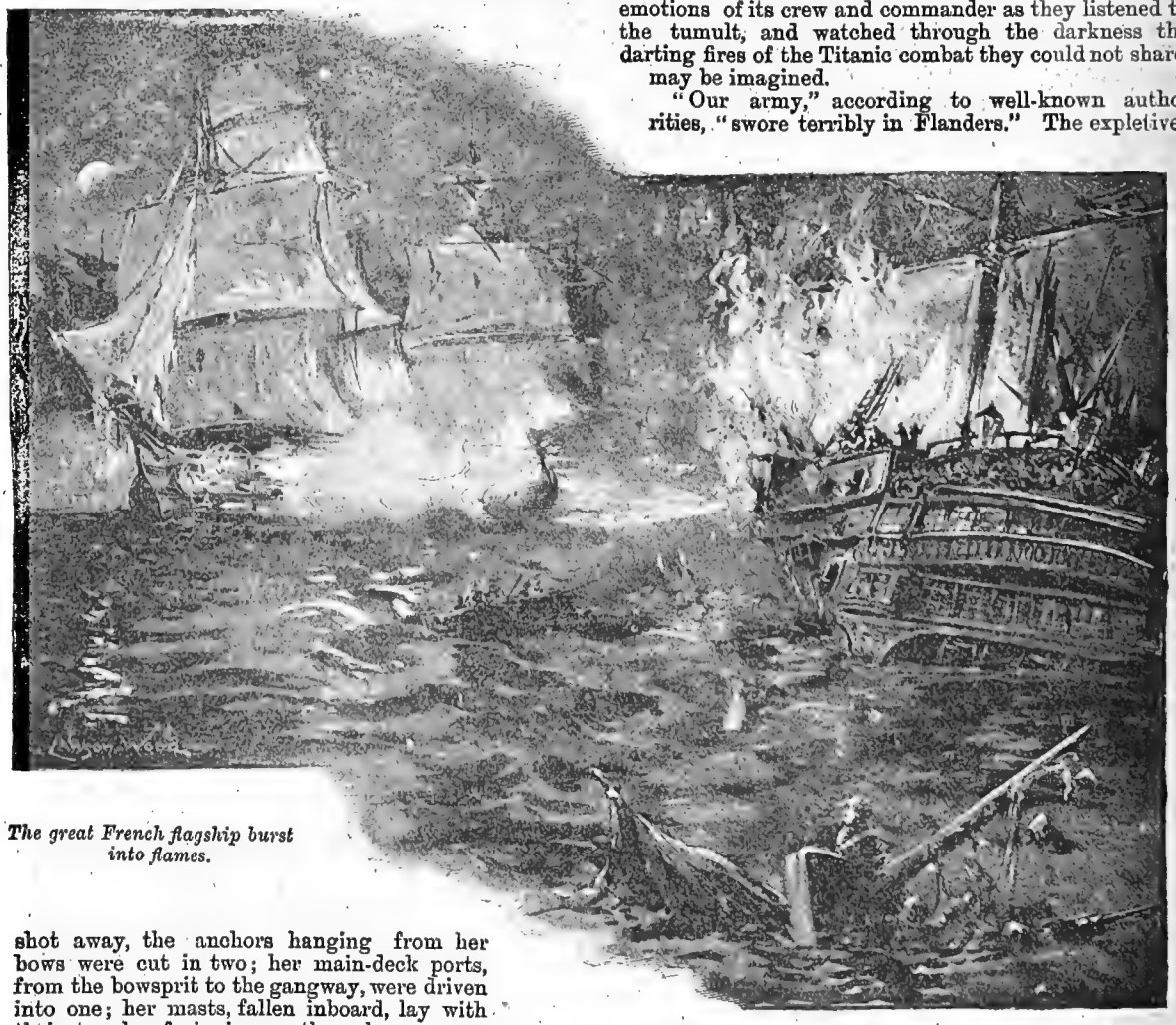
The *Audacious*, meanwhile, was too impatient to tack round the head of the French line; it broke through the gap betwixt the first and second ships of the enemy, delivered itself, in a comfortable manner, of a raking broadside into both as it passed, took its position on the larboard bow of the *Conquérant*, and gave itself up to the joy of battle. Within thirty minutes from the beginning of the fight, that is, five British line of battle ships were inside the French line, comfortably established on the bows or quarters of the leading ships.

Nelson himself, in the *Vanguard*, anchored on the outside of the French line, within eighty yards of the *Spartiate's* starboard beam; the *Minotaur*, the *Bellerophon*, and the *Majestic*, coming up in swift succession, and at less than five minutes' interval from each other, flung themselves on the next ships.

How the thunder of the battle deepened, and how the

quick flashes of the guns grew brighter as the night gathered rapidly over the sea, must be imagined; but Nelson's swift and brilliant strategy was triumphant. Each ship in the French van resembled nothing so much as a walnut in the jaws of a nut-cracker. They were being "cracked" in succession, and the rear of the line could only look on with agitated feelings and watch the operations.

The fire of the British ships for fury and precision was overwhelming. The head of the *Guerrier* was simply



The great French flagship burst into flames.

shot away, the anchors hanging from her bows were cut in two; her main-deck ports, from the bowsprit to the gangway, were driven into one; her masts, fallen inboard, lay with their tangle of rigging on the unhappy crew, while some of her main-deck beams—all supports being torn away—fell on the guns.

Hood in the *Zealous*, who was pounding the unfortunate *Guerrier*, says: "At last, being tired of killing men in that way, I sent a lieutenant on board, who was allowed as I had instructed him, to hoist a light, and haul it down as a sign of submission."

But all the damage was not on the side of the French. The great French flagship, the *Orient*, by this time had added her mighty voice to the tumult, and the *Bellerophon*, who was engaged with her, had a bad time of it. It was the story of Tom Sayers and Heenan over again—a dwarf fighting a giant. Her mizzen-mast and main-mast were shot away, and after maintaining the dreadful duel for more than an hour, and having 200 of her crew struck down, at 8.20 p.m. the *Bellerophon* cut her cable and drifted, a disabled wreck, out of the fire.

Meanwhile the four ships Nelson had left in the offing were beating furiously up to add themselves to the fight. Night had fallen by the time Troubridge in the *Culloden* came round the island; and then, in full sight of the great battle, the *Culloden* ran hopelessly ashore! She was, perhaps, the finest ship of the British fleet, and the emotions of its crew and commander as they listened to the tumult, and watched through the darkness the darting fires of the Titanic combat they could not share, may be imagined.

"Our army," according to well-known authorities, "swore terribly in Flanders." The expletives discharged that night along the decks and in the forecastle on the *Culloden* would probably have made even a Flanders veteran open his eyes in astonishment!

The *Swiftsure* and the *Alexander*, taking warning by the *Culloden's* fate, swept round her and bore safely up to the fight. The *Swiftsure*, bearing down through the darkness to the combat, came across a vessel drifting, dismasted and lightless, a mere wreck. Holliwell, the captain of the *Swiftsure*, was about to fire, thinking it was an enemy, but on second thoughts hailed instead, and got for an answer, the words, "*Bellerophon*; going out of action, disabled." The *Swiftsure* passed on, and, five minutes after the *Bellerophon* had drifted from the

bows of the *Orient*, the *Swiftsure*, coming mysteriously up out of the darkness, took her place, and broke into a tempest of fire.

At nine o'clock the great French flag-ship burst into flame. The painters had been at work upon her on the morning of that day, and had left oil and combustibles about. The nearest English ships concentrated their fire, both of musketry and of cannon, on the burning patch, and made the task of extinguishing it hopeless.

Bruéys, the French admiral, had already been cut in two by a cannon shot, and Casabianca, his commodore, was wounded.

The fire spread, the flames leapt up the masts and crept athwart the decks of the great ship. The moon had just risen, and the whole scene was perhaps the strangest ever witnessed—the great burning ship, the white light of the moon above, the darting points of red flame from the iron lips of hundreds of guns below, the drifting battle-smoke, the cries of ten thousand combatants—all crowded into an area of a few hundred square yards.

The British ships, hanging like hounds on the flanks of the *Orient*, knew that the explosion might come at any moment, and they made every preparation for it, closing their hatchways, and gathering their firemen at quarters. But they would not withdraw their ships a single yard.

At ten o'clock the great French ship blew up with a flame that for a moment lit shore and sea, and a sound that hushed into stillness the whole tumult of the battle. Out of a crew of over 1,000 men only seventy were saved! For ten minutes after that dreadful sight the warring fleets seemed stupefied. Not a shout was heard, not a shot fired. Then the French ship next to the missing flag-ship broke into wrathful fire, and the battle awoke in full passions once more.

The fighting raged with partial intermission all through the night, and when morning broke Bruéys' curved line of mighty battle-ships, a mile and a half long, had vanished! Of the French ships, one had been blown up, one was sunk, one was ashore, four had fled, and the rest were prizes.

It was the most complete and dramatic victory in naval history.

The French fought on the whole with magnificent courage; but, though stronger in the mass, Nelson's strategy and the seamanship of his captains made the British stronger at every point of actual battle. The rear of the French line did not fire or lose a man.

The wonder is that when Nelson's strategy was developed, and its fatal character understood, Tilleneuve, who commanded the French rear, and was a man of undoubted courage, did not cut his cables, make sail, and come to the help of his comrades. A few hundred yards would have carried him to the heart of the fight.

Can anyone doubt whether, if the positions had been reversed, Nelson would have watched the destruction of half his fleet as a mere spectator? If nothing better had offered he would have pulled in a wash-tub into the fight.

Villeneuve afterwards offered three explanations of his own inertness: (1) He "could not spare any of his anchors." (2) "He had no instructions!" (3) "On board the ships in the rear the idea of weighing and going to the help of the ships occurred to nobody."

In justice to the French, however, it may be admitted that nothing could surpass the fierceness and valour with which, say, the *Tonnant* was fought. Its captain, Du Petit-Thouars, fought his ship magnificently, had first both his arms, and then one of his legs shot away, and died entreating his officers not to strike.

Of the ten French ships engaged, the captains of eight were killed or wounded. Nelson took the seven wounded captains on board the *Vanguard*, and, as they recovered, they dined regularly with him. One of the captains had lost his nose, another an eye, another most of his teeth, with musket shots.

Nelson, who himself had been wounded, and was still half blind as a result, at one of his dinners offered by mischance a case of tooth-picks to the captain on his left, who had lost most of his teeth. He discovered his error, and in his confusion handed his snuff-box to the captain on his right, who had lost his nose.

What was the secret of the British victory? Nelson's brilliant strategy was only possible by virtue of the magnificent seamanship of his captains, and the new fashion of close and desperate fighting, which Hood and Jarvis and Nelson himself had created.

It is a French writer, Captain Gravière, who says that the French naval habit of evading battle where they could, and of accepting action from an enemy rather than forcing it upon him, had ruined the *morale* of the French navy.

The long blockades had made Nelson's captains perfect seamen, and he taught them that close fighting at pistol-shot distance was the secret of victory.

"No English captain," he said, "can do wrong who, in fight, lays a ship alongside an enemy."

It was a captain of Nelson's school—a Scotsman—who at Camperdown, unable just as the action began, to read some complicated signal from his chief, flung his signal-book on the deck, and in broad Scotch, exclaimed: "Up with the hellem an' gang in the middle o't." That trick of "ganging into the middle o't," was irresistible.

The battle of the Nile destroyed the naval prestige of France, made England supreme in the Mediterranean, saved India, left Napoleon and his army practically prisoners in Egypt, and united Austria, Russia and Turkey in league against France.

The night battle in Aboukir Bay, in a word, changed the face of history.

(*"The Fusiliers at Albuera" next week.*)

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The current number of *The Sunday Reader* is full of the most interesting Stories, Articles, and Anecdotes. There are interviews with the President of the United States, and with his mother. A series of articles on the phrenology of preachers is continued, the characteristics of Dean Farrar as shown by the shape of his head being fully gone into. There is also a picture and an interesting article upon a new form of Christian work—that of preaching and conducting a service by telephone.

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TOLD BY THE DOCTOR.

II.—The Secret of an Old Garden.

CHAPTER I.

The Disappearance of Yseult Dunbar.

The old garden in Pulteney Street, behind St. James' Park, has always interested me. Lying secluded and unnoticed behind a tall, red-brick wall, it covers an extent of ground which in that fashionable part of London must be worth a king's ransom. I had often, in passing the end of the street, wondered what lay behind the wall; and when, one day, the door stood ajar, I could not resist the temptation to go a few steps out of my way in order to satisfy my curiosity. It was like a glimpse into an old world—the well-kept grass lawn, the yews benched round, and the moss-grown gravel path, of which I got a view through the open gateway.

I wondered what man could afford to resist, for the sake of this old-time retreat, the golden persuasion of the speculator and builder. I wondered all the more when I found later to what a quiet, unostentatious little house the garden was attached; and I often wished that I could get another glimpse of the old-world garden.

I little thought then that it was to be so intimately connected with one of the most interesting cases ever brought under my notice—a case so mysterious and perplexing at the time, that the particulars are perhaps worth repeating. I will endeavour to give them as concisely as possible.

On August 13th, 1891, there called upon me at my house in Cheyne Walk, a young man who gave the name of Frank Ogilvie, and whose appearance prepossessed me at once in his favour. He was too impatient about consulting me even to take a chair, but started at once on the question which had brought him. He had heard of me through the papers, in connection with the celebrated Dessalene case, with which my name was considerably mixed up, and thought of me as a person likely to take interest in a medical case which suggested villainy.

I asked him to be seated, and assured him of my willingness to give him any assistance in my power.

"Thank you!" he said, still standing. "I should very much like you to come and see Miss Yseult Dunbar, the young lady who was to have been my wife."

"Is she ill?" I asked. His reply startled me.

"They say she is dead."

I looked at my visitor keenly, wondering for a moment whether I had to deal with a maniac, driven from sanity possibly by the death of a sweetheart. It would not have been the first time that I have had such visitors invoking my assistance in the most fantastic exploits.

But it required little more than a glance into the young man's face to assure me that there was no mania in the present case.

Mr. Ogilvie evidently understood the meaning of my glance. He went on quickly to explain:

"Miss Dunbar is lying apparently dead; I believe that she is in a trance."

"How long has this continued?" I asked.

"Three days. On Monday evening she was in perfect health, apparently. On Tuesday afternoon I received a telegram in the City to say that she had died suddenly, and when I hastened at once to her house I found her as I have stated."

I asked him to be seated.

"But she has been seen by medical men. Do they pronounce her dead?"

The young man gave a gesture of disgust and contempt.

"She has been seen by Dr. Mitcheller, a decrepid old woman, with a will of water. He has been persuaded into signing the certificate of death, as he could be persuaded into signing anything or stating anything, by Yseult's guardian."

"The guardian wishes to avoid an inquest, I suppose?" I said; "it is the first thought with many people when a sudden death occurs in the family."

"He wishes to see Yseult buried as quickly as possible, rather," returned Ogilvie sternly, "alive or dead."

"Indeed; that is a serious accusation to make against any man. What reason have you for making it?"

My companion glanced at the clock on the mantelshelf.

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"If you would not mind coming with me at once," he said, "you will be able to see Miss Dunbar, I think, without any interruption from Mr. Gavin Temple, her guardian; and I can tell you all the particulars on the way."

I could see that the young man was dying with impatience to have my decision on the question, which was of such supreme importance to him—the fact of his *fiancée's* life or death; and I made no demur, therefore, to his proposal, but put on my hat and accompanied my visitor into the street. He signalled a hansom from the end of Oakley Street, and we were soon driving rapidly in the direction of Pulteney Street, where, my companion informed me, Miss Dunbar lived.

"Now," I said, as soon as we were seated, "let me have all the particulars of the case, please. Firstly, who is Miss Yseult Dunbar—an orphan?"

I supposed so, from the mention of a guardian. "Who is this guardian?"

"Gavin Temple—a cousin of her father's."

"In whom you have no confidence?"

"That I have not," said Ogilvie. "I have found him out to be altogether unscrupulous."

"You think he would have an interest in making out that the young lady is dead, even if she is not?"

"It would be very much to his interest to see her buried," said my companion bitterly. "Miss Dunbar is the only bar between him and an income of two thousand a year. The money was left by her grandfather, Lord Englon, in a rather eccentric will, Gavin Temple, her father's cousin and only relative, as far as I know, being appointed executor and guardian. According to the will, all the money and the property in Pulteney Street, which is very valuable, was to go to the guardian in case Yseult died unmarried."

"And the lady appears to have died just as she was about to marry?—a coincidence which is certainly suspicious in itself," I said.

I was ashamed of alluding so unsympathetically to the marriage when I saw the look of inexpressible pain which came into my companion's face.

"We should have been married in two days' time," he said brokenly. "The banns have been published, even."

"Do you think that this Gavin Temple has killed his ward?" I said. "It is best for us to speak quite openly to one another."

My companion shook his head.

"I have not thought so," he replied gravely. "From what I know of his character, I should say he would not take the risk of doing that. My idea is that Yseult has gone into a trance—she has done so before—and that Temple suspects it, and is anxious to get her buried before she revives."

"Excuse me," I said, interrupting him, "but the previous trances are important. Have you seen Miss Dunbar in a trance before?"

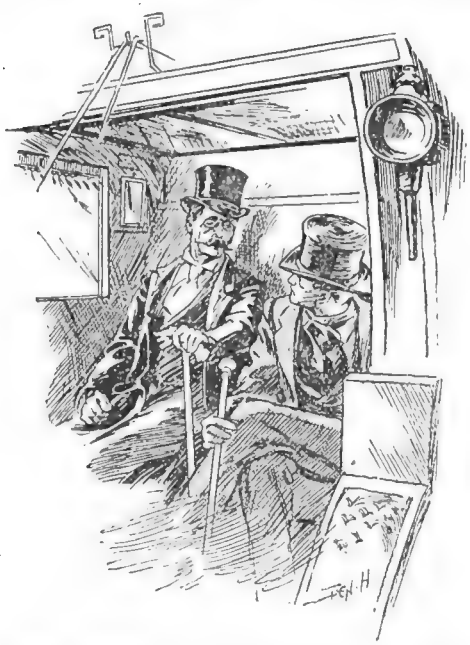
"No; I have heard about them only. When we became engaged, she thought it her duty to tell me that she had had these trances as a child. The last occurred, I believe she said, when she was eleven—that is, nine years ago."

"It is certainly a case in which great caution ought to be exercised," I said, fearing all the while lest I should raise undue hope in the young man's heart. "Has Mr. Temple fixed the date of the funeral?"

"Yes; for to-morrow."

"That is certainly too soon," I said. "Unless I find the clearest proofs of death when I see the lady, we will take measures to have the funeral stopped by reporting the case to the Registrar-General, if necessary. The certificate of death, of course, was out of order, if Dr. Mitcheller did not see the deceased until after death."

"Yes," replied Ogilvie, "that is why I was in such a hurry to get you to the house. I feared that if Gavin Temple had the least idea of what was going on, he might hasten the burial in order to circumvent us. For that reason I have kept a watch on the house every day since the trance commenced."



Driving rapidly in the direction of Pulteney Street.

"If trance it is," I added, fearing that my words had made the young man too hopeful.

"Thank Heaven! we shall know in five minutes," he replied, as our hansom turned Buckingham Palace Road.

"Possibly," I said. "But you have not told me anything tangible against this man Temple. What makes you suspect him of so much villainy? If he has given proofs of it, I wonder that you allowed your *fiancée* to remain in his care."

"I blame myself every hour for it," said Ogilvie. "It seems madness to me, now I look back upon it. But any other course would have been difficult; and, in reality, I know little or nothing against the man. It is only what I feel and suspect. For instance, among Lord Englon's property when he died was a very valuable collection of gold ornaments, some of them richly jewelled, and all of them having a value even greater than their intrinsic worth on account of their age and rarity. Well, as soon as the old man breathed his last—six months ago now—the family jewels were found to be lost. They were bequeathed, with almost everything else, to Yseult. Now, of course, it is only suspicion, but I have always put down the disappearance to Gavin Temple. Certainly nobody else had his opportunities. He lived in the house, you know, as a sort of companion to Lord Englon, he and his daughter."

"Gavin Temple is a married man, then?" I asked.

"Yes, a widower. His daughter, Madge, as I said, lives with him in Yseult's house. They were to remain there until she married. The old man seems to have dated everything by his grand-daughter's marriage.

Staring . . . at the long, empty oaken box.

There is a locked trunk, too, in the place, which is to be opened on her wedding-day—or the day of her death. I suppose her guardian has opened it by now."

He broke off suddenly, overcome by the remembrance of his sorrow, and just then the hansom turned into the street with the tall brick wall, and to my suprise stopped at the green door which opened upon my old-world garden.

"Is this Miss Dunbar's house?" I said as we left the hansom and turned into the refreshing shade of the garden. "What a lovely place! I wonder at its preservation in such a valuable neighbourhood?"

"It was a matter of faith with the old lord to preserve it," answered my companion quickly.

We were crossing the lawn under the yews towards the house, and Ogilvie seemed consumed by nervous impatience to reach it.

"If Gavin Temple knows who you are, he will try some devilry to prevent your seeing Yseult," he said. "We will enter by the French windows of the drawing-room, which open on the garden, without announcing our presence, and I will take you straight up to her room."

"Yes, that will be best."

The drawing-room was empty; but in the passage outside, as we passed through, a servant in black went by. She started when she saw us, but my companion nodded reassuringly.

"Is Mr. Temple in, Mary?" he asked.

"No, sir; he has not been in since this morning."

"All the better; we shall not be disturbed," he said to me in an undertone, and led the way up the broad oaken stairs. Frank Ogilvie was acting under excitement, I could see, and I must admit that I was not quite as calm as usual. The young man's story had moved me greatly, and the thought that another few moments would decide whether I must encourage or dispel for ever the hope he was so fondly harbouring—the hope that his sweetheart still lived—made me feel nervous and agitated.

"This is Yseult's room. They have placed her body in the coffin already, in here," said my companion, stopping before a curtained doorway, and he turned the knob softly.

I followed close behind into the room, which seemed to be a lady's bed-room. The coffin stood at the other side of the bed on a couple of trestles. I was so impatient to see the body which it contained, that I passed my companion and walked quickly across the room. Then I turned quickly and faced him.

"I thought you said that she had been placed in the coffin?" I began, but my words died in my throat when I saw that Frank Ogilvie was staring in a strange, petrified manner at the long, empty oaken box. I thought for a moment that he was losing his senses.

Then suddenly his face changed and became inflamed with anger.

"They have buried her!" he cried in a voice of passionate anguish. "Oh, why did I leave her with him—the murderer—the villain!"

I tried to calm him.

"If Miss Yseult had been buried," I said quietly, "the coffin could not have been left here. Are you quite sure she has really been placed in it?"

"I saw her here to-day," answered Ogilvie, looking down into the empty casket. "They have buried her while I was away."

The thought that Miss Dunbar might have recovered from her trance—if trance it was—did not seem for a moment to occur to him, and I hesitated to hazard this explanation of her disappearance for fear of awakening in the young man's heart hopes which might be only doomed to disappointment, especially as the servant downstairs had made no mention of such a remarkable circumstance.

"You expostulated against the body being placed in the coffin?" I asked.

"Yes, most emphatically."

"Then perhaps your remonstrance has had effect, and the body been moved," I said, "until the fact is more certain that it is that of a corpse. Let us call a servant and inquire."

I crossed to the bell-pull as I spoke, and my summons was answered almost immediately by the girl whom we had met on entering the house. I undertook to question her, since Ogilvie seemed so hopelessly assured that there had been foul play, to show any interest. He stood by the empty box on the trestles, while I put my few interrogatories, watching the girl's face keenly while I did so.

There was really no doubting the completeness of her astonishment when she heard that the coffin was empty. She poked her head into the doorway, peeping over at the coffin across the room, as though she could not believe my words.

"Empty, sir? It can't be, surely!" she exclaimed. "Why, there hasn't been anybody in the room!"

"Look for yourself," I said. And the girl crossed the room to the open box.

Frank Ogilvie came over to my side.

"How cleverly the villain has managed it!" he said in a whisper. "The girl evidently has seen nothing of the removal."

"But, my dear fellow," I exclaimed; "you say that you saw the body this morning. Mr. Temple cannot have carried it out and buried it without a coffin in broad daylight."

"Then he has hidden it in the house. We will make a complete search at once."

"Is there nobody of whom we can make inquiries

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first?" I said. "Perhaps there may have been some honest reason for the removal."

"I am afraid not," replied my companion. "But I will ask Madge—Miss Temple, if she is in."

"You mean Gavin Temple's daughter?"

"Yes."

"Ask her, by all means. I am anxious to see her," I quickly replied.

Miss Madge Temple was a *petite* young lady of about twenty-six, with a pale little face, and small black eyes. Her eyes looked all the blacker through contrast with her light, colourless hair. She came at once in answer to the request which we sent by the maid, who, during our short conversation together, had been searching all over the room, as if she expected to find the coffin's occupant under the bed, or hidden in the wardrobe.

Miss Temple seemed fully as astonished as the maid had been at our news. She made the suggestion which had occurred to my mind, but which I dared not mention to Ogilvie, for fear of raising false hopes.

"You thought all along that Yseult was only in a trance," she said. "Perhaps she has recovered and got out of the coffin herself."

The young man shook his head sadly.

"Where could she have gone? Why did she call none of you?"

"And what did she put on?" added the maid. "I've looked in the wardrobe and drawers, and none of Miss Yseult's things have been touched."

"Let us have a look through the house, at any rate," I suggested; and as there was nothing else to do, we started in single file, visiting all the rooms in succession. In each room Frank Ogilvie remained to search thoroughly every place in which a corpse could possibly have been hidden. It was easy enough to see that he would not even consider the explanation of Yseult's disappearance which Miss Temple had suggested. He had made up his mind so thoroughly to expect some villainy on the part of that young lady's father, that it did not seem possible for the disappearance to be due to any cause but Gavin Temple's wicked machinations. The maid's statement that none of Miss Yseult's clothes had been touched was quite enough to dispel what faint hopes he might have had of his sweetheart's resurrection. He marched through the rooms, peeping into wardrobes and boxes with a dark frown on his determined face, and he did not speak a word during the whole search. Madge Temple followed him about with tears in her little black eyes, speaking to him now and then words which I could not catch, and which met with no reply.

Only once he spoke. It was when we entered what I suppose was Gavin's study. On the table stood an iron deed-box, bearing the name of *Miss Yseult Dunbar* in white letters. Ogilvie pointed towards it.

"He has opened it, I suppose?"

Miss Temple shivered before his glance.

"Yes," she answered, in a low tone. "The will said: 'On the day of her death.'"

Ogilvie made no reply.

The search was ended at last, and then we stood and looked at each other in bewilderment. Every room and attic in the place, I believe, we had examined, outhouses included, and not a trace of Yseult Dunbar was to be found, alive or dead.

"Please, miss, I can't stay another night in this house," said the servant, who had accompanied us throughout, getting whiter and more scared-looking every room we entered. "It isn't canny, miss; I shall have to go, if I lose my wages and character as well for it."

And uncanny it really did appear. I began to think that Frank Ogilvie must be right, and that the only explanation of this mysterious disappearance was to ascribe it to the cunning machinations of an interested and unscrupulous man.

CHAPTER II.

On the Track.

I was very much afraid, as I have said throughout, of encouraging in the young man hopes that were almost certain to be ill-founded; but I could not ignore altogether the possibility of Miss Yseult's recovery.

Suppose the lady had been merely in a trance, as Ogilvie seemed at first to imagine, and had recovered and left the house—how dressed I did not stop to calculate—I had to think what would be the most likely refuge to which she could have taken her way. I inquired of Ogilvie where his own residence lay; and when he informed me that it was within five minutes walk of Pulteney Street, I suggested at once that we should repair thither, in the hope of hearing some news of the missing lady. In my heart of hearts I hoped that we should find Miss Yseult herself there; but I did not suggest it to my companion. I was glad I had not done so when we arrived at the house, a substantial residence in Queen Anne's Gate, and found that nothing whatever was known of the mysterious occurrence.

Ogilvie's mother, a sweet, aristocratic-looking old lady, seemed deeply affected by her son's trouble. She took me aside at the end of our talking, and begged me to do all I could to find out the solution of his *fiancée's* disappearance. Of course, I assured her that now I had taken up the case, I should never rest until I knew all about it.

"You will not think it wrong of me, I know," she said hesitatingly, after she had thanked me, "if I mention to you, as I should certainly not do to anybody

Miss Madge Temple was a petite young lady.

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less interested in the case, my own suspicions. It is hateful to suggest suspicion of anybody to a third person; but in a case like the present it seems necessary,

Ogilvie pointed towards it.

and I can depend, of course, upon your receiving it as it is given?"

I bowed in silence, wondering what was coming. The old lady's voice sank almost to a whisper.

"Whatever foul play there has been in connection with poor Yseult's death," she said, "I am inclined to credit to Madge Temple, rather than to her father."

I was surprised. Miss Madge Temple had not struck me altogether in an unfavourable light. But very possibly Mrs. Ogilvie knew much more of her than I did.

"What motive would she have?" I asked.

"The same motive as her father. Whatever wealth he gains, of course, by poor Yseult's death, his daughter will share."

She stopped: but I thought there was more to come, and pressed for further information.

We were standing in a room furnished cosily as a library and study, which opened out of the hall, and Frank had left us, to make a hopeless search through the house.

Mrs. Ogilvie glanced over her shoulder, as though afraid that he would return and overhear, as she answered my questioning.

"Yes, she had other reasons. I am sure she was jealous of Yseult."

"She cared for your son?"

"I am afraid so."

I nodded gravely.

"The thought occurred to me when she followed him in his search over the house to-day, but I am fully persuaded that she knows nothing of the disappearance."

"Possibly not. Her father would not trust her with his plans on this very account, lest she should reveal them to Frank; but, from her conduct after Yseult's death, I have grave suspicions that her conscience is not altogether clear concerning it."

"Well, at present the one question is: Where is Miss Yseult Dunbar?" I said in a louder key, as Frank re-entered the room. "Had the young lady any other friends in London from whom we could make inquiries?"

Young Ogilvie shook his head.

"She had absolutely no friends," he said, "apart from us. Gavin has taken pains to make her life as secluded a one as possible. If a happy chance had not taken me to the house, she would have known nobody."

"Then whatever remote hopes we may have had that the young lady left the house herself alive must be abandoned," I said. "If she had recovered, and feared to remain in the house with her cousin, she would certainly have placed herself at once under the protection of your mother. I am afraid there is no room whatever for hope of that sort."

"I had no hope," replied Frank with tightened lips.

I was glad to hear him say it.

"We can do nothing now," I said, "until we have seen Gavin Temple." And both Mrs. Ogilvie and Frank agreed with me, although the former seemed rather afraid at the thought of the meeting between her son and the man suspected of tampering with his *fiancée's* life.

"I must track him if possible," said the young man, "and discover how he has spent the day. Dare I hope that your engagements will allow you to accompany me, Dr. Tavel?"

His mother's face brightened when I replied that till the mystery of Yseult Dunbar's disappearance was solved, I had no engagements. She had evidently begun to rely upon my exertions a good deal, and I made up my mind that I would prove myself worthy of her trust.

(*This story will conclude next week.*)

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Here you have the last batch of pictures. Write down the names in the spaces provided, fasten the five lists together, at the top left-hand corner (sending the lower half of the page only), put them in an envelope marked **Members**, and post in time to arrive at Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post, Monday, May 3rd. Attempts arriving later will be disqualified.

It is to be hoped that each competitor will send some small subscription to the Fresh Air Fund—say twopence in stamps. The amount is limited only by your generosity. Do not stick the stamps on the attempt. Put them in a separate envelope.

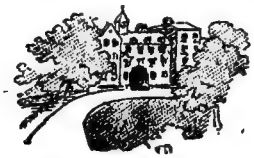
You may forward as many attempts as you like, but each set of five must be in a separate envelope, and will be considered separate attempts.

No. 31.....

No. 32.....

No. 33.....

No. 34.....



No. 35.....

No. 36.....

No. 37.....

No. 38.....

Remember these Things.

Young People should compete and get their elders to help them.

If there is any picture you cannot name some friend may be able to give you the information.

You need only give the surnames of the people, except in cases where the christian names are depicted.

Name.....

Address.....

No. 39.....

No. 40.....

There are plenty of sources from which you can obtain a list of the names of M.P.'s.—Whitaker's Almanack, the London Post Office Directory, Hazell's Annual, and publications of that sort. They will help you to win.

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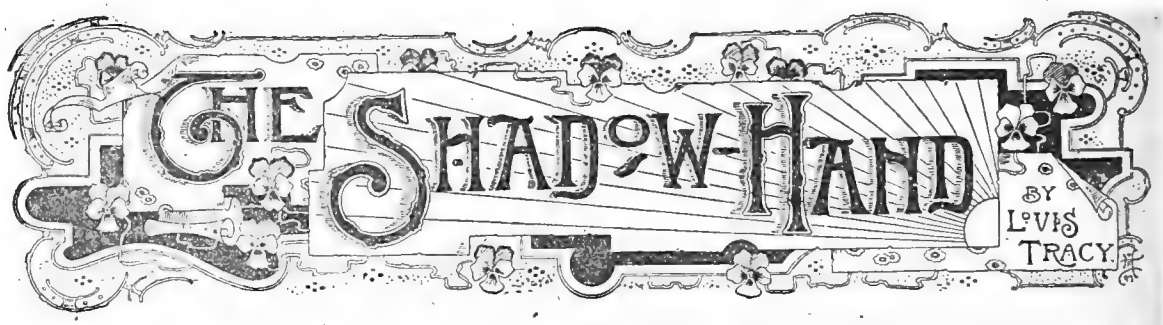

CHAPTER XXVII.

Mr. Hawke Schemes.

The very day after the death of Lemaitre, Cécile and Jack Heathcote started for the Casa Calvo, on the banks of Lake Como. Cécile first telegraphed to Lady Hilton, who was then at Dieppe, telling her that she had discovered the whereabouts of Edith, and would bring her at once to Paris, where Lady Hilton should await her.

But when Cécile and Jack reached the Casa Calvo, Edith was not there. She had fled secretly from the house.

"I say, darling, when *are* we going to be married?" said Jack, in fresh despair. "Miss Wentworth is becoming too intolerably tiresome, you know."

"Be silent," answered Cécile. "On the same day that she is married you shall be my master, sir. Till then I hold the reins."

"But she isn't even engaged yet, is she?"

"Oh, yes, but it is a private engagement. Be silent!"

Meanwhile Edith had fled again, and was again as lost to them as ever. They could not even remotely guess where she was, not having any clue to the motives of her conduct.

Two hours after them, Hawke, with a red handkerchief bandaged aslant round his bruised forehead under his hat, also arrived at the Casa Calvo, in urgent haste to see Edith. Mr. Hawke was desperately in need of funds, and his ingenuity had contrived a scheme to fill his empty pockets. What had become of Lemaitre's money—where it was deposited—or where Lemaitre, if he had it in a lump, had hidden it, he could not conjecture. The money had, in fact, an hour before Hawke's arrival at the château on the morning of Lemaitre's return, been thrown by Lemaitre upon the same flames which burnt the coat and the photograph. For money the doomed and haunted man had had no longer any need.

Hawke was in quest of money. And he decided to get it from Captain Arthur Musgrave.

He had seen in an English paper that Arthur was severely wounded at the battle of Kassassin, and now lay in hospital at Ismailia. How much, Mr. Hawke wondered, would Arthur be willing to pay for Edith? Mr. Hawke knew where Edith was; Arthur did not; Hawke knew the secret which had banished her from her friends, and could now reveal it; Arthur did not.

"He's gone through a lot for that there girl," pondered Mr. Hawke; "he ought to be willing to put down something very handsome for her. If he is, I undertake to bring 'em together!"

But first he went to make sure of Edith herself, and open her eyes to the fact that he was not her father—and Edith was gone.

But whither? Neither Cécile nor Hawke had any idea where to turn next.

Cécile, however, was not anxious: she now knew the precise reason of Edith's flight from home; and that it was a reason not based upon facts. All she had to do was to put a message in the *Courier du Soir* which Edith appeared to read, saying that her father was, in actual fact, Ernest Wentworth: and at once Edith would cease to have reason to keep away from home.

Cécile at once telegraphed to the *Courier du Soir* the words which she wished inserted, and set out westward again with Jack. She reached Marseilles that night. Up to then she had no notion that such a battle as Kassassin had been fought. But during the evening a letter from Lady Hilton to the *poste restante* gave her the news of Arthur's wounding.

"Then that is where Edith is gone to!" cried Cécile. "She has gone, or is going, to Egypt to nurse him! Quick, Jack! See when the next boat leaves Brindisi."

Jack went hunting among the tables of the hotel, and found that the next P. & O. boat, the *Orient*, left Brindisi on the evening of the fourth day.

"We will meet her there, then!" cried Cécile.

"But are you sure of your ground this time?" said Jack. "The movements of Miss Wentworth don't in general seem very calculable——"

"Can't you be silent, then? She is going to Egypt, I tell you! She is! I divine it. Quick! Send a telegram to Lady Hilton, saying that Edith will be at Brindisi in time for the *Orient*, and I, too, and you!"

"But—suppose it isn't true, darling?"

"You have not, then, learnt to trust me a little? She has seen the news in the papers about Arthur's wound. That is what has happened!"

"But won't she also see your message in to-morrow's paper?"

"No—probably not. She has no longer any interest in papers. All her thoughts now are centred upon Egypt, and upon escaping Dr. Danton in case he should discover her flight, and pursue her. She does not know, remember, that Danton is dead."

At this time Inspector Wheeler had just arrived at Lemaitre's château, in hot search for Hawke. Cécile, half in fun, had telegraphed him information where Hawke might be found. Hawke, however, was gone. Wheeler made inquiries which sent him upon another expedition of urgent haste to the Casa Calvo, and here again Hawke had vanished.

"I'll pat that man on the back *yet*, see if I don't!" said Wheeler to himself. He had the belief that half the sorrows in the world were due to Hawke.

At the railway station he received information which led him to believe that Hawke had travelled to Genoa, and to Genoa Mr. Wheeler accordingly directed his course.

Genoa, in fact, was where Mr. Hawke really was. Nearly his last shilling was spent; and on the night after his visit to the Casa Calvo, he stood in a cell of a Jew pawnbroker's shop with his heavy gold watch and chain in his hand.

As he leant forward to scoop his money in over the counter he saw in the next compartment—Edith!

Her head was turned away; she did not see Hawke. Nearly all the afternoon she had been going to and fro between her mean lodging and the pawnshop, pledging everything of any sort of value that remained to her. The

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paper which she had seen had reported Arthur as dying. She was going to him. It was impossible that his head should die on another breast.

Her difficulty was to find money to pay her train fare and steerage-passage.

When she went out of the pawnshop, Hawke followed her with perfect caution. Her scanty luggage was apparently already at the station; for she walked straight in that direction. Hawke heard her take ticket for Brindisi.

"Oh, so?" he said to himself, "that's it, is it? You've found out, then, without your father's assistance? But suppose I put a spoke in yer little wheel, my lady? What if I claim you now as a father, my hearty?"

But he had a better thought. If he could get to Egypt before her. He was afraid of attempting to detain her here; she might be rebellious, or fly. There might be a row: he had an instinct that Wheeler was after him again. But if he could get to Egypt before her? If he could see Arthur, and bring Arthur away in the hope of seeing her, from the place where *she* expected to see *him*? Each would then be hopelessly lost to the other; and Mr. Hawke's idea for making them happy by bringing them together was something like ten thousand pounds.

"I think Musgrave could go that," pondered Mr. Hawke.

But to get to Egypt before her? He consulted time tables, and saw that she would probably leave Brindisi in the afternoon of the third day. If he could get the right craft he could do it. He, too, immediately took train for the south.

Brindisi at its best is a wretched town. In spite of the constant stream of people passing through it, the unenterprising inhabitants have hardly erected a building since the time it was a fishing village.

There is, therefore, not a very great choice of hostelries at the place. Edith had selected the cheapest at the end of the town. In the afternoon of her second day there, the

Beneath the deck awning.

door of her room opened without warning, and Cécile Delisle rushed into her arms with a wild and happy cry.

Lady Hilton, pensively smiling, stood in the doorway, and Jack Heathcote, and behind them Professor Queech, with Mrs. Queech, once Miss Newton. These last, travelling to Palestine in quest of data for the Professor's theories, had met the Hilton party *en route*, and had come on thus far with them.

"Edith, dear, I am very pleased—very pleased, my child—to see your face again!" said Lady Hilton, "and you went from us wholly for nothing, as we now know. How could you? Edith, Edith!"

Edith, trembling in every limb, seemed to herself as if just risen from the grave. Somehow, without understanding, she gathered that life, happiness, was to be hers again. She saw a film like tears in Lady Hilton's eyes, and wiped it gently away.

"I am yours now for 'ever!" she whispered; "but once more—only once—I must go from you."

"But why, dear?"

"I am going to Arthur! You will let me?"

"We are all going, dear, all of us here; even Professor Queech, whom you may remember, and Miss Newton, now his wife."

Lady Hilton retired to the outer room, and Cécile and Edith entered upon a debauch of caresses.

"But let one look at one's own soul! Why, you are no longer a girl—you are a woman! Edith, have you changed to me? Am I not still your chief?"

"I am a *woman*, you say. One cannot cease to love one's soul; but a *woman's* chief love must be a man, Cécile!"

She laughed gaily, for the first time for many months.

When the steamer arrived they discovered that one of the saloon cabins had been reserved for two Indian merchants, who were to join the ship at Suez; and that, to that point, this was at the service of the ladies. Jack and the Professor would be accommodated by the steward somewhere.

They took their seats as the sun set beneath the deck-awning on the afternoon of departure, gazing out over the water at the lessening shores of Italy.

Mr. Hawke, meanwhile, had made terms with the *padrone* of a fair-sized Maltese *speronare*, whom he met at Brindisi, and, with three days' start, was now well on towards the coast of North-Eastern Africa.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Wheeler v. Hawke.

Edith had seen in the *Courier du Soir* that Arthur was grievously wounded, and likely to die. This, however, was not the case. Immediately after the battle of Kassassin, he was missed by Pendragon. On his return to Mahsameh, Pendragon, almost weeping, organised a search-party of tired troopers, and returned to the scene of action. They found Arthur lying insensible over Tom Wilson's body.

But the next day the regimental surgeon at Mahsameh said to him:

"Your breast-wound is not dangerous; I have got the bullet out. But I see that your ankle is much swollen. You will only bother us here. What I shall do will be to put you in one of the men-of-war launches, and send you to Ismaïlia, where you will be much better looked after than at the front. You will, moreover, be far cooler there, if you get a decent tent."

And to Ismaïlia Arthur accordingly went, and contrived to obtain very suitable quarters. He got the use of a house close to the canal, and had a large square tent pitched in the inclosed garden, overlooking the canal, where it was both cool and retired. After a couple of days' perfect rest, he felt much recovered.

He was sitting at his tent door on a balmy, sultry afternoon, his white head uncovered, his ankle on a canvas chair, and a look of gentle sorrow in his clear eyes, when from the direction of the canal, a stout short man approached; and Mr. Hawke, in his open frock-coat, but without the heavy gold chain of other days, stood before him.

"I know your face; who are you?" said Arthur.

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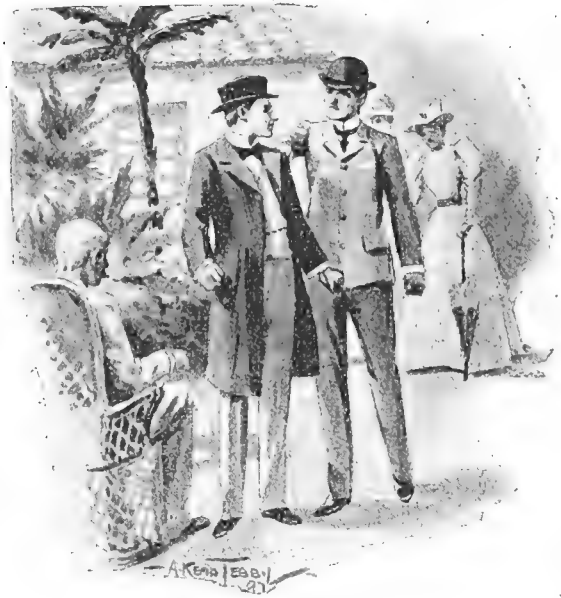
He had seen Mr. Hawke on that awful day, when he slept the Sleep of the Angels, at No. 11, Rue Taitbout.

"My name is—hem!—Hawke, sir."

"Where have I seen you before?"

"Oh, well, that's neither here nor there. I was a good



"Got *you, Hawke!*"

deal mixed up with Dr. Danton, you know. Danton's dead."

"Ah!—and what is it you want now, Mr. Hawke?"

"I'm come about Miss Wentworth. Are you in a fit state to travel at once?"

"I think so. Tell me: Miss Wentworth, you say?"

"That fetches him," thought Hawke. He added aloud: "I know where Miss Wentworth is. If you can arrange to leave here within the next half hour, I can take you to her."

"Where is she?"

"She's in Europe. But, of course, I am a poor man. I don't want to make b'lieve that I'm altogether what you'd call a philanthropist. If I take you to her, the figure would be five thousand as soon as we reach Italy, and five thousand when I bring you face to face."

"I see. You are a good disciple of Dr. Danton. Well, suppose I say yes: what guarantee have I, first, that you will keep your word, and, second, that Miss Wentworth desires to see me?"

"Well, don't you see, I'll keep my word for my own interest; and I can tell you for a fact that Miss W—— does want to see you. You see, the reason she ran away from home was a little fib which Danton—you know Danton's little ways—which Danton told her about her parents. Once she knows that that warn't true, she'll receive you with open arms, and everything will be first rate."

"Was this the object with which you came to Egypt?" asked Arthur.

"That wur just it."

"What did you come in?"

"A sailing boat from Malta."

"And you have her ready for the voyage back?"

"Yes—everything's ready, only waiting for you."

"All right, Mr. Hawke. I'll go with you. But remember, if there is any trick in this, you shall have a lesson which you won't forget."

"Oh, well, I don't say, mind you, that as soon as ever we get to Italy I shall take you straight away to Miss W——. I don't say that, you know. But I know where she is—and sooner or later——"

"All right, I'll go. You speak fairly enough. Just lend me a hand—my ankle is rather bad——"

But Hawke never lent him a hand. At that moment the garden gate opened, and a big, well-fed man, with fresh-coloured face, walked briskly up the path; before Hawke could look round, he felt a clap on his shoulder, and heard the words:

"*Got* you, Hawke!"

Every drop of blood left Mr. Hawke's face. He knew that voice.

But there was a ripple of laughter in the air—the sweet voices of women—petticoats fluttering at a run up the garden walk; and Edith was on the breast of Arthur; and Cécile's jubilee of mirth was ringing in the air; and tears were rolling down Lady Hilton's cheeks; and Professor Queech was saying to his bride, the Miss Newton of old:

"A most extraordinary thing, now; with reference to that, I can tell you, my dear, a fact not, I believe, generally known——"

And Cécile in her mad gaiety was crying:

"Oh, Inspector Wheeler, I *do* so congratulate you!—you have got him at last! you have got Mr. Hawke!"

And Mr. Hawke was saying:

"Well, he has; you have, Wheeler. Fair's fair. But I always did say I could outwit you, Wheeler. You haven't got the shadow of a charge to bring against me. You will have to pay my passage to England, which just now is a very fortunate thing for me——"

And suddenly Cécile was dragging Edith from Arthur, in order to ask him:

"But Tom Wilson! where is he?"

And there was Arthur's blank, and sad, and guilty face, with its white crown of hair, unable to utter to her the words she guessed.

And there was Jack Heathcote with his arm round her neck, trying to draw away her hands from before her weeping eyes; and she, with face hidden against the canvas of the tent, was crying and mourning, as mourners mourn and skirl over the beloved dead:

"Oh, Tom, my boy! Oh, Tom, my child, my child!"

The End.

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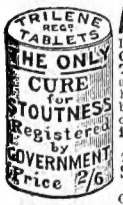

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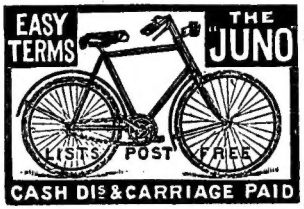

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Answers to Correspondents.

On page 571 will be found the last batch of sketches in the Picture Puzzle Competition. When you have solved all the sketches you can, put them in an envelope and send them along, to reach this office by first post Monday, May 3rd. You will notice the remarks about a small subscription to the Fresh Air Fund. I am sure that you will inclose as large an amount as you can possibly afford.

Young Shaver.—If you wish to have a fine, smooth beard and moustache when you are older, you certainly should not shave as much as you say you do, for this treatment tends to make the hair rough and coarse.

H. H. G.—In both Japan and Russia tea is provided gratuitously to their passengers by the railway companies. You should never send your manuscript rolled.

G. N.—The chances are less than you think. Only one couple in a thousand live to celebrate their golden wedding. However, I hope you will be spared to see September 27th.

Puzzled.—A "first foot" in the North of England is the person who first crosses the threshold of a house after the advent of the New Year. In Yorkshire a fair man, or a woman, be she dark or fair, is not allowed to be the "first foot," as the superstition runs that such an event would bring ill-luck upon the house throughout the year. If, however, a dark man is the first to enter the house, good fortune will follow the family.

D. C. B.—There are only two species of birds found only in the British Isles. These are the red grouse and the coal tit.

T. B. C.—As regards private fortune, our own Queen is the richest monarch in the world.

G. C. M.—Yes, the same kind of wire may be used for both telegraphic and telephonic purposes.

E. K. J.—The idea that it is lucky to find a horseshoe arises from an old superstition that a horseshoe was a protection against witches.

Tommy Atkins.—The bed of the French soldier is undoubtedly the most comfortable of all soldiers' beds. It consists of a wooden or iron bedstead, a straw bed, a wool mattress, sheets, a brown woollen coverlet, and an extra quilt for cold weather.

A. W.—A simple method of distinguishing between a genuine and paste diamond is to touch them with the tongue. The diamond will be much colder than the glass, as it is a much better conductor of heat.

H. H.—Salisbury Cathedral has a window for every day in the year. Wollaton Hall, in Nottinghamshire, and a house in the Isle of Wight, possess the same peculiar feature.

T. B. D.—The navy is a much older institution than the army. From the very earliest times England has possessed a navy, but the army as it is now was only established in the reign of Charles II.

G. H.—Pestalozzi was the original founder of the "kindergarten" system of training young children, although his pupil, Froebel, who carried on his work after his death, generally gets the credit.

J. W. B.—Go to a school of art, Government, if possible, learn drawing generally, and join the black and white class. When you feel competent do some *original* drawings and send them to suitable papers for approval.

H. T.—There is no truth whatever in the belief that a shark swallows its young in time of danger and disgorges it again when the danger is past.

Homo.—Your friend is right. It is no uncommon thing for people to wait in London for four or five hours in order to secure a good seat in a theatre; and on special occasions they will sometimes hang about the doors of a theatre from eight in the morning until half-past seven in the evening.

D. B. C.—Certainly, the force of gunpowder is much greater than that of steam.

W. E. W.—The ostrich is the largest bird in existence.

Margaret.—The period of English history known as the "golden age" was during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The time of Queen Anne was known as the "silver age," and the present is designated the "iron age" of England, owing to the hard, matter-of-fact commercial spirit which now prevails in this country.

S. S. B.—A "paraph" is the term applied to the flourish with which the majority of people embellish their signatures, in order to make forgery less easy.

S. G. D.—No, there are no snakes indigenous to Ireland.

F. W.—The use of the "side-saddle" for ladies was introduced into England by Anne of Bohemia, wife of Richard II. Previous to that time women rode in the same way as men.

W. D. F.—Chinese is, undoubtedly, the most difficult language to learn.

R. H. B.—There is no hard and fast rule as to the class of people entitled to put the black Hanoverian cockade on their servants' hats. At first it was purely a military distinction, but now any justice of the peace, officer of the militia, yeomanry, or volunteers, etc., can adopt it.

G. B. D.—Certainly birds teach one another to sing. In fact you cannot get a young bird to sing correctly unless it has had tuition from an older bird.

G. H. G.—Table-turning is due neither to a supernatural agency nor to electricity. It is merely the result of unconscious pressure on the part of the operators.

A. N. M.—Englishmen of the professional classes are the tallest men in Europe.

T. W.—Yes, rain does sometimes fall from a cloudless sky. Although this phenomenon is seldom seen in England, it is not uncommon in various other parts of the universe.

J. W. W.—Penny postage stamps cost the Post Office authorities about eightpence per thousand.

P. K.—The magnificent colours seen in soap bubbles are due entirely to the reflection of the light.

R. C.—You are quite right. The air is lighter during rainfall than it is in fine weather.

Mr. W. A. Shaw is the inventor of a new game. It is no common game. The apparatus required is similar in appearance to a tennis racket without the mesh, and with the top shaved off. There is a cup attached to each of the ends of the prongs, and one on a spring in the centre. A ball is propelled by the centre spring against a wall, and when it falls the object is to catch it in one of the other cups. The address of the inventor is 1, Houndsgate, Nottingham.

The coming celebrations in honour of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee will be a rare harvest time for purveyors of lamps. In all directions they are up to their ears busily inventing new designs of every description. Among the most charming are those of Messrs. Hearn, Wright and Co., of Chatsworth Road, Lower Clapton, London, E. They are willing to supply as many thousand lamps as you might like to have in the shape of the Queen's head. There is many a worse way of showing your loyalty than by scattering Queens' heads with candles inside them promiscuously all over your back garden on the auspicious night.

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A VERY DIFFERENT THING.

When a man has an attack of toothache, or sprains his ankle, or gashes his finger with a knife, he understands what ails him as well as the most eminent medical authority in the country would understand it. He may not be able to *treat* his trouble, but he knows *what it is;* and consequently suffers no mental anxiety arising from doubt and mystery.

But when he is overtaken by an illness which it is difficult or impossible to locate, which seems to affect half-a-dozen different parts of his body at once, so that he cannot say, "It is here," or "It is there," he is justified in apprehending something profound and serious. No wonder that under these circumstances Mr. Boorman could not tell what had come over him.

"In March, 1891," so runs his short account of it, "my health began to fail. I felt low, weak, and had no strength or energy. *What had come over me I could not tell.*

"I had a foul, horrid taste in my mouth, and no appetite. As soon as I had eaten, the food lay on my chest like lead. I was constantly spitting up a gaseous, sour fluid, and something would rise into my throat enough to choke me.

"I was much troubled with palpitation; my heart would thump and throb until I could scarcely bear it, and I had often to sit up in bed to ease the pain. I gradually got worse and worse until I was in a shocking state of weakness."

[If a person under such circumstances were to make up his mind he had what is called "heart disease," who could point the finger of ridicule at him for thinking so? If he were worried with apprehensions of sudden death from that cause, are *you* the man to say he was afraid of nothing? Not you, nor anybody else. And yet—— But let's have the rest of the letter.]

"I could hardly drag one leg before the other," continues Mr. Boorman, "and was so nervous that the least thing would startle me.

"I consulted a doctor, but his medicines did me no good, and in October (1891) I went to Bartholomew's Hospital, but was no better for their treatment. I afterwards went to the Bethnal Green Hospital, but with the same result. I had now got so low and weak that I despaired of ever getting better, and thought I was in a consumption.

"In January, 1892, I read of cases like mine having been cured by Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I got a bottle of this medicine from Mr. Lucas, chemist, Talbot Road, and after taking it I found relief. I continued taking it, and in a month felt quite a different man.

"I could eat and the food gave me no pain; and slowly I gained strength. By-and-bye I was well and strong as ever, and have since kept in good health. Mother Seigel's Syrup has saved my life, and I wish others to know of it. You can publish this statement and refer anyone to me. (Signed) William Boorman, 61, Perry Street, Northampton, October 23rd, 1895."

What, then, was it that came over Mr. Boorman? In the light of the result, and the manner of the cure, I answer without hesitation —It was the dark foreshadow of the most common and the *most dangerous* disease known —indigestion, dyspepsia; the collapse of the body's power to keep itself up; the slipping from under him of the very foundation stones of his vitality. *That* was what had come over him.

Then why didn't he recognise it? Why didn't the doctors seem to recognise it? Why couldn't they "tell" what it was? Because it is the Prince of Deception, the counterfeit of all diseases *outwardly*, and the reality of all diseases *inwardly*. Because, having one nature, it has a hundred shifting symptoms. Its roots are in the stomach, and its branches run from head to heel.

When you feel the vague trouble that came over Mr. Boorman, recall these words and take Mother Seigel's Syrup, without waiting to wonder what ails you.

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